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*God and Woman*

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*Works by the same Author*

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THE GREAT HUNGER

THE POWER OF A LIE

THE FACE OF THE WORLD

OUR KINGDOM

# GOD AND WOMAN

BY

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"OUR KINGDOM," AND "THE FACE OF THE WORLD"



HODDER AND STOUGHTON  
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*Part I*

MARTEA stood under the plank bridge leading to the second story of the barn and watched her two brothers driving a loaded wagon destined for the village. She was a striking figure, with her aquiline nose, flowing white sleeves, dark bodice, and red petticoat. She placed her hands upon her hips and drew up her mouth on one side into a sneer. Nearly everyone was going to the fair. Large Lofoten boats full of young people would soon be out on the fjord, and to-morrow morning they would be in the village. But she—she was not good enough. She would have to stay at home on the farm all her life and slave for her brothers.

The two middle-aged bachelors, who walked on either side of the wagon, wore black, broad-brimmed hats. Their homespun coats had been thrown on top of the load, and their blue shirt-sleeves were of a material that Martha had woven. It was cheaper to have a sister than a servant. One of them, Ola, stopped and called :

“Martha !”

There was no answer. He placed his hand to his mouth and shouted :

“Take good care of the stock while we’re gone.”

A derisive little laugh sounded from under the plank bridge.

The large yellow house with white window frames lay there quite empty, lit up by the brilliant sunset. The red cow-house in the background seemed asleep,

while the stabur,<sup>1</sup> resting upon its poles, was wrapped in silence. Up in the hills lay the grey summer cowshed, where the cows would soon gather to be milked.

Martha walked slowly across the wide, level courtyard. She was tall, dark haired, ruddy, and her eyes had a proud, disdainful look. She halted at the kitchen door with her hand upon the latch, thinking how many things might happen while she was entirely alone.

But then, it ought not to be so bad during the light summer nights. She straightened herself and went in, her steps echoing through the empty house. In the kitchen pots and pans gleamed from the walls. In the living-room the sun streamed in through the two windows facing west. The large wall-clock began to strike. The air was filled with an evil deed which sought the daylight, but lifeless objects are witnesses unable to tell what they know. Listen! Was that a footstep in the attic?

Martha sat down in a corner and stared straight in front of her.

So many things had happened during the last year. Both of her parents had died, the one shortly after the other. Old Per Ersland had been a big man in his day. But the two elder brothers had been named to divide the estate, and they had divided it according to their notions.

Martha had once been engaged to the forester on the Myr estate, and had gone to school at the parsonage in order to be educated as a fine lady. Then the day came when she found her inheritance had been cut down to a paltry hundred dollars; and the forester needed a wife who had more.

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<sup>1</sup> Stabur, a small house upon poles, used for the storage of food

Of course when he broke off the engagement folks had something to grin about. Men no longer raised their hats when they met this country girl who wanted to marry a gentleman. It was easy enough to get people to stare as long as everything went well, but as soon as her luck turned they were ready to jeer at her. The brothers, too, contributed their share of sneers—storming at her and saying that it was all her fault, and that she brought shame and disgrace to the whole family. They decided it was best for her not to show herself among people any more, and went around with their eyes closed. If she happened to come in while they sat with their heads together, immediately there was silence.

It is all right for a time to shut yourself up indoors, to do the weaving, washing, cooking, and milking, and to keep busy outdoors and indoors from five in the morning until midnight. It keeps back your tears and holds down your thoughts. But lately she had started to burst out laughing when one least expected it—her snickering frightening herself and causing her brothers to jump.

Strange thoughts flitted through her mind. "What if you should run away? Your brothers believe, perhaps, that you are tied down here and that they will never be put to any expense for a housekeeper or a maid. But what if you should break away now? People would sneer; but you could stand that. You might want to go to the fair again—even you. What if you should do that? Ha, ha, ha! But perhaps you don't dare? What if you should dare? Ha, ha, ha!" Her little dry laugh sounded through the empty house and gave her a start.

She stared vacantly. Her body began to sway back and forth.

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"You must find something else to do, Martha. You must get away from here, or you—or you will lose your wits. You will go insane. Do you want to do that?"

Outside, the sun sank slowly down toward the greenish blue crest of mountains back of the fjord in the west. From the band of forest on the mountain-side the ground sloped evenly down toward the coast, and was dotted with red, grey, and yellow farm buildings, each with its square piece of ground where field and meadow seemed to sway in the gentle south wind. All the windows appeared to have their gaze fixed upon the fjord and the western sky, because it was from this direction storms and misfortunes came during the long winters. And upon the wide silver-grey river the world would ride in and out with sometimes white, sometimes weather-beaten sails. Often large ships, bent upon adventure, would come in from the very sea itself, or from some distant land. It might happen also on a summer day that these ships would have music aboard.

To-night there was great commotion on the Priest river, back of the red point of land toward the south. Three Lofoten boats lay near the shore and took chests and boxes and people aboard. Men in white jumpers and lup boots, each with a woman or a young girl in his arms, waded out to the boats and placed her aboard. Black and mottled shawls and kerchiefs fluttered in the wind. Laughter and shouts resounded. "Hey there, Kal Koya, while you have the girl in your arms, why don't you give her a kiss?" The girl twisted, but of course she could not throw herself into the bay. Ah, there was plenty of fun for those who had time to see it.

Close to the point lay Steffen Verket's yacht, with

its green stripe at the water-line, taking horses aboard. The crowds on the shore began to thin out. There were small, black fjord horses, that nodded their heads at each step as they were led over the sand, and bay, nut-brown, and black carriage horses that reared and snorted and plunged and refused to go aboard. Several men held one by the bit, while others shoved from behind, all to be scattered when the horse took a sidestep. The people on shore screamed as it began to look dangerous, while on the boats the women folk also screamed. Steffen Verket, with his black beard and blue skipper's jacket, stood upon the roof of the cabin and gave orders. "Hey there, Daniel Flyta! Are you crazy? Is that mare of yours shod? Do you want her to kick the planking to slivers so that we'll sink when we get out on the fjord?"

There were stalwart farmers on the verge of tears because they had to part with some nag they had raised. There was a young trader, Hans Lia, who bought to-day and sold to-morrow—cows, calves, horses, and herring; in fact, anything that could be turned into money. He had even traded his way to the ownership of a seine. But one could not say exactly that he was well-to-do, or that he was highly honoured. He would drink and fight, and every time he went to town he would land in jail and be fined. He was a big, broad-shouldered fellow, with a brown beard and smiling, blue eyes.

"Where did you pick up those calves?" shouted Ola Ersland to Hans as he led his two black fjord horses up the gang plank. They were rather stunted creatures from the poor district on the coast, and looked as if they had been raised on tar and fish.

"In England," said Hans as he turned toward Ola. He brushed his beard out of his mouth and said very

confidentially. "They were bought for the King. The sheriff ordered them, and, early in the morning, they will be sent to Christiania."

"Oh, you confounded——"

Folks laughed and slapped their thighs. "Ola Ersland got an answer to his question."

The Lofoten boats had got under way and the yacht was ready to cast off when a small boy shouted: "Here is one more who wants to go."

All looked up the beach. There on the path among the rocks appeared a tall young woman. She wore a black skirt and on her head a kerchief. In one hand she carried a basket, and, in the other, a box. She was out of breath, and looked as if she had been running in order to be in time.

"Well, I declare, if it isn't Martha Ersland," someone said, and everyone on the yacht and on the Lofoten boats stared at her.

"You'll have to hurry, if you're going to travel with us," shouted Steffen Verket, who still stood on the cabin roof of his yacht.

But one of the Lofoten boats had already sent out a dory to fetch her.

Ola Ersland stared at her for a moment. "You take the horse," he said to his brother and ran to meet his sister. He reached her just as she was about to step into the dory.

"Where in the Lord's name are you going?"

"To town," she answered, and placed her basket and box in the dory.

"To town!" he stammered. "To town! You! Are you—are you crazy?"

"Are you crazy because you're going to town?" she asked innocently. And now she was aboard.

Ola pranced about in the sand nervously and

clenched his fists. It couldn't be helped since others were listening.

"You ran away from the farm! And the cows—who is going to look after the cows?"

"They are your cows," she said, "and I suppose you are the best one to look after them." She drew the shawl about her and sat down. The oarsman rested his oars, uncertain how this affair would turn out.

"Go home, Martha! You go home, and go this very minute!" He reached out to take hold of the dory.

"Row," said Martha. The oars dug into the fjord, and the dory shot from the land. Aboard the boats there was silence. Everyone stared.

Ola Ersland, in anger, walked up the beach.

"Are you going with us?" shouted Steffen Verket.

"No!"

Ola turned abruptly toward his brother aboard the yacht.

"You'll have to sell the mare. Do the best you can, Martin. The one who has a little brains left will have to use 'm. The stock will have to be looked after."

He set out up the path, clenching his right fist and swinging it angrily above his head.

When Martha came aboard, the other women who sat around the mast made place for her. She did not say a word; nor did she look at anyone. She sat down, placed her basket upon her lap, rested her head back against a chest, and looked straight ahead.

The four vessels lay almost in a line when the sails were raised. There was just breeze enough to give the mirror-like surface of the fjord a bluish tint. It was nearly midnight, but still as light as day.

Only a narrow strip of cultivated land under the mountains to the west lay in light blue shadows. In this very same way had the forefathers sailed to the St. Hans fair on a light summer night since time out of mind. And now again the slender Lofoten boats, with their square mainsails and topsails, moved slowly over the calm fjord. They had sailed the Lofoten Sea all winter and had weathered the north-east storms of the spring. Now, however, their sides had a fresh coat of tar, and the white stripe along the water-line was newly painted. The fishermen were weather-beaten, and, by common agreement, old and young wore a brush of beard under the chin. They lit their pipes and sought out comfortable places. This trip to the fair was almost like a wedding.

"Whose baby is that bawling?" Kal Koya shouted to the yacht—a colt was whinnying and causing a disturbance among the horses.

"Ah, baby yourself," replied Steffen Verket. He stood now with the tiller in one hand and a coolie in the other.

"Haven't you a wet-nurse aboard who can feed it?"

A peal of laughter burst over the silent fjord. Kal Koya, the little fellow with the big wreath of red whiskers and the gold ear-rings, was always playing the clown.

Where the fjord extended inland toward the east it became wide almost like the ocean. The wind died down. The sails hung limp. Soon the fjord was smooth as glass. The mountains to the west were mirrored so distinctly in the water that the green hills and the snow-capped tops seemed to rest upon the surface of the water. The four vessels out on the fjord hovered over red clouds and blue sky. Their dark hulls and slack sails were also mirrored in the fjord.

No other vessels were visible. The vast, shining surface was without movement and without sound. Even the eider ducks, gathered in large flocks, lay floating near the shore with their heads under their wings.

The conversation aboard the boats also died down. Around the mast, in the bow, and in the stern, the passengers found as comfortable positions as they could and closed their eyes. Most of them turned their faces toward the east, as if to be ready to welcome the dawn. The dories in tow of the Lofoten boats resembled children with permission to accompany mother.

The man at the tiller kept his pipe warm, and sat quietly and observed the weather. He saw the glow in the western sky move slowly toward the north. He saw it leave the north and work its way toward the east with steadily increasing brightness. The flocks of birds woke up and made trails upon the smooth surface. The faces which were turned toward the east began to take on a red tinge. A day had ended an hour ago. Now a new day was born. Several of the sleepers opened their eyes and sat upright. The eastern sky was afire. The fir-clad hills far in the distance seemed sprinkled with gold. A few small billows, hardly big enough to be seen, came rolling along, bearing a burden of light. They came nearer, then sank again into the deep. It was just a little playful mimicry; then it was gone.

The sun rose. The passengers began to move about and shake themselves. It becomes cold at night on the fjord, even at midsummer time.

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of the fjord it comes with a school of small billows leading the way! The vast mirror vanishes, and soon the fjord is one great living field of rollicking waves.

Everyone is awake. The late sleepers rub their eyes, feeling quite fresh, shouts and laughter sound again from one boat to the other, while, to add to the merriment, the grey-bearded sacristan, who wanted to change places, slipped and fell backwards into a basket of eggs. When he arose, the back of his grey homespun was a sorry-looking yellow. Those who had not been fully awake became so now.

Shortly afterwards smoke rose from the cockpit in the stern, and from one of the neighbouring boats Thomas Rönningen shouted: "What is it you're cooking over there that smells so good?"

Kal Koya was making pancakes of the broken eggs. Of course, there was no stove aboard, but he lit a fire in the bottom of an empty herring barrel. A tin plate served as a frying-pan, and in order not to burn his fingers, he held it over the fire with a pair of blacksmith's tongs.

"I suppose you will invite us to your party," shouted Hans Laa, who was aboard the yacht.

Toward the south there appeared through the haze, first a crest of mountains, then houses under the crest, many houses, then steeples and masts. This was where the bishop lived. "It is the town," sounded from many lips, and all looked in that direction. Soon there were ever so many houses under the brilliant light of the rising sun. They came gradually nearer. The town loomed large, the churches sending up gilded spires from the mass of houses. The rattle of a wagon and the noise from the stone bridge could be heard. Along the harbour front was a row of wharves, where the names of firms in large black

letters finally could be made out: "Halvard Rustad, Herring--Fish." That was the town.

Inside the breakwater they rowed through a world of steamships and sailing-vessels, which seemed to be without a living soul aboard. Farther along in the harbour there were smaller vessels, yachts and boats of different kinds, and, above them, a flock of white seagulls shrieked. There was an odour of rotten water, of herring and fish, and tar and rubbish, which caused the horses' nostrils to dilate.

Now there was a stir on board to find a place to land. Along all the wharves were steamships and sailing-vessels. The public landings were crowded with boats. How in the world would they ever get the horses ashore?

"Hang it all, we'll tie up at the ferry landing," said Steffen Verket, and made a line ready.

Two men in blue jumpers stood up in a couple of boats tied to the landing. One was tall, had a large red nose, and wore white duck trousers. The other was small, and had a foxy, pock-marked face.

"What do you want, good folks?" asked the tall man as he reached for his boat-hook.

"I say, may we tie up here so we can put our horses ashore?" asked Steffen very politely. But the two ferrymen were well-known characters. Politeness was of no use here.

"What, tie up here and kick our landing to shivers! No! You fellows better get the 'ell out of here, or we'll call the police."

Now the wrangling began. The men in the boats called the ferrymen lazy loafers, gipsies, and good-for-nothing louts. And the two ferrymen, now on the landing, ran about on their slim legs, swung their boat-hooks in the air, and cursed the "potato-diggers."

"You go straight to hell with your old nags and your rotten women folks"

Suddenly a great many strange beings gathered from the landings and the wharf-sheds--loafers, tramps, and beggars, who thought that perhaps they might see some fun. There were blue noses among them, and trousers with half a leg missing. Naturally they sided with the two ferrymen. "To hell with the lousy potato-diggers!" When Kal Koya reached for the landing with his boat-hook there was a shower of brickbats. Now the fight was on in earnest.

The women aboard cried hysterically.

"We'll have to give in," said Steffen Verket, and scratched his head. "But if we do, damn it all, we'll have to go way up north of the town to put the horses ashore."

At this moment a splash was heard. Hans Lia had jumped overboard from the yacht and had taken one of the horses with him. All eyes were fixed upon Hans. Now the women had something more to scream about. The rabble on the landing shouted hurrah, until they understood that he was making for the shore. This man, whose head came up out of the filthy water, followed by a horse, was surely an aggressor.

"Hey there, hit him with a brick! Ram that boat-hook through his head!" came from the crowd. Then someone shouted: "It's Hans Lia!" The crowd drew back for a moment. Was it Hans Lia? They knew him from former times.

Before they knew what was happening, he had crawled up on the landing and dragged the horse after him. The poor beast arched his back and shook himself, so that the water rained in all directions. Hans was dripping wet and had lost his hat.

"What do you want here?" one of the crowd shouted, coming nearer.

"To teach you common decency," Hans replied, and the next moment he had snatched a boat-hook from one of the ferrymen. That was enough. That was more than city folks could stand. Now things grew lively. Now there was attack.

"Throw him in the bay!" Hans was alone. Empty bottles and stones whizzed through the air. Knives flashed. The horse snorted from fear, reared and plunged. Suddenly Hans sat astride the horse. Then he was better able to swing the boat-hook. Fortunately, it was made of good stout birch, and had an iron hook, also a spike, at one end. Oaths and shrieks of pain were heard. The horse foamed and danced about, keeping most of the crowd at a distance, but it could not find a place to break through. All aboard the boats stared. The men saw that Hans was alone. But they were not related to him. And what if the police should come! To follow Hans Lia to jail!—no one had any desire to do that.

"Don't you see they are getting the best of him!" one of the women aboard shouted suddenly.

It was Martha Ersland, who was standing on the edge of the boat with her hand on the rigging.

"Are there no men folks here who dare——" and she threw a bailing-bucket into the midst of the crowd on shore. But none of the men aboard seemed to have courage to do more than use their tongue. Hans continued to fight alone. There were shrieks and groans and oaths, but they did not come from Hans. On the ships in the neighbourhood sleepy heads appeared, curious to know what was happening.

One by one the rabble began to slink away, one with his hand over his nose, another, limping, with

his hand over his back. The tall ferryman lay in a swoon. The other sneaked down into his boat and swore he would pay the damned farmers for this. Hans looked for his assailants. What had become of them? His face was bloody, but nevertheless he grinned. This was great sport for him.

"Now you can come ashore, my good friends," he said. "Now there is plenty of room."

Finally the police came. The first one they arrested was Hans. They knew him from of old. He had to give up his horse and go along with them.

When Martha had stepped ashore she heard her brother call, so she waited. "Where do you expect to stop?" he asked, his face green with anger.

She looked at him from head to foot and said: "You didn't dare to risk your skin either, you wretch!" Then she went her way and let him rage.

It was about five o'clock when she walked along the harbour carrying her basket and her box. The sun was up, but the town still slept. Aboard the boats, sleepy country people who had come to town for the fair began to crawl out and rub their eyes. In a ten-oar boat, having a green stripe along the water-line, two young women were seen combing their hair and leaning over the gunwale in order to use the smooth surface of the fjord as a mirror.

Up through the wide main street leading from the harbour to the cathedral were long rows of white tents for the accommodation of visiting traders. Everything was still closed, and, behind all the shop windows, the curtains were down.

In the courtyard at Gaustad's a man was currying a horse that was tied to a post at a watering-trough, when Martha arrived and inquired for lodgings. A sleepy maid appeared, looked at her inquiringly, and wanted to know whether she had brought her own fur-coverlet.

"No," said Martha.

"Well, then it will cost you three shillings a night. If you had brought your own fur it would be two."

Martha was ushered into an old-fashioned peasant's lodging-house—a large room with beds in three tiers around the walls. There was a concert of snores, loud and soft. The air had an oppressive odour of sweat, wet clothes, tar, strong tobacco, and brandy.

On the floor chests and boxes, men's clothes, and women's clothes lay scattered helter-skelter.

"You may take this place," said the maid, pointing to a bed in the lowest tier. "We're expecting a woman from Kristianssund, who is going to sleep in the same bed."

Martha took off her shoes and stockings and lay down between the dirty blankets. It was frightfully warm. A pale woman in a bed across the room coughed and spat up blood. A sailor who was drunk tossed about wildly in his sleep, uttering curses and shouts. An old man with white hair and beard, occupying the bed above him, groaned and prayed for his wretched soul. In the top tier above her own bed, a young man and a young woman were talking and laughing. All the others slept and were snoring.

Martha closed her eyes. Oh, what a day! But why did she come to town? What could she have to do with young folks now? And what good would it do her to go back to Ersland, after what had happened yesterday?

At last she went to sleep, and she dreamed of Hans Lia. He had been fighting again and she must help him dress his wounds.

Later in the day she went out alone into the busy and happy town. First she went to the market-place and sold her butter and eggs. Then she wandered about among the crowds between the rows of tents, where country folk haggled and bought and talked and laughed. There was cloth of many colours from Sweden, tin buckets and copper kettles from Birn, canvas with nickel-plated fastenings, and all sorts of pretty things. There were folks from the coast and from the inland districts, farmers in homespun, fishermen in jumpers, and, here and there, a



Lap in his quaint dress. Then she drifted out into some of the other streets of the town and wondered what to do to make the time pass. Carioles with drunken men thundered by. No doubt they were trying out a horse they thought of buying. Once she stopped and stared. A gentleman in a light suit and hat, with a lady at his side, drove by in a cart. They were, no doubt, engaged. Wasn't that the forester at Myr?

Two men on horseback rushed by at breakneck speed and a policeman ran after them. The horses were foaming. The men had their hats on crooked, and shouted and sang. One of them was Hans Lia. What would he be up to to-day?

The third and last day of the fair the visitors began to go home, and there was nothing for Martha to do but go aboard one of the Lofoten boats together with the other folks from her neighbourhood. The boats were loaded with all sorts of wares. Farmers' wagons, shining with fresh paint, extended their arms over the gunwale. New spinning wheels and looms were piled up around the mast. Steffen Verket's yacht was again loaded down with horses, for those who had sold had bought others again. Steffen Verket stood upon the cabin roof of his yacht and chewed and spat and raged.

"Who is it we're waiting for?" someone asked.

"Oh, it is Hans Lia, of course. If we did the right thing we'd start out without him, so help me——"

"Hans Lia—he was dead drunk to-day. I guess he must be in jail again."

"Well, then he can stay there. We have other things to do than to lay here and wait for that scamp."

Martha had been sitting quietly near the mast. Now she rose, and, just as the boat had started to move from the landing, she caught hold of the rigging and jumped ashore. She walked hurriedly in the direction of the town. The people aboard stared after her. The skipper called to her and asked if she was coming along with them. She did not reply. Then her brother also jumped ashore and set out after her without saying a word. All aboard gazed first at him then at one another.

"They're queer people," said one, and grinned.

"Well, if people are crazy, let 'em be crazy," said Steffen Verket. "Now we're off. Ho, there, let go the line!"

The next day Hans Lia sat on a stairway in a livery stable and drank, in celebration of a horse sale, with a black-whiskered gipsy. He dared not become sober, because Brit Besvolden, his sweetheart, was hunting for him from one end of the town to the other, and, no doubt, there would be great lamentation when finally she should find him. He had a bloody bandage over his forehead. His hat hung down over one ear. His eyes were red because of drink and loss of sleep.

The gipsy proposed a game of cards. A piece of board was found which they placed upon their knees. When the cards appeared, another gipsy, with a black moustache, entered from a doorway and sat down with them.

Hans lost. He brought out a leather wallet, bulging with bills, from an inside breast pocket. It looked as if he had done some clever trading this year. The gipsies produced a bottle. Hans placed it to his mouth and took a deep draft. Then he began to sing a jolly song.

The gipsies pretended they also drank out of the bottle, and wanted Hans to drink again. "Take another drink. We have more in the stall."

There were steps outside. The gipsies saw a young woman come in and look straight at them. Before Hans had taken the bottle from his mouth, a hand was placed upon his shoulder.

"Come with me, Hans. The fair is over now."

Hans lowered the bottle. Was he dreaming? This was not Birit Besvolden. This was not his whining sweetheart. It was Martha Erslund, who once was to be a fine lady at Myr, who had gone to school at the parsonage, and who thought she was too good to associate with the young people of the parish. What did she want with him?

"Come with me, Hans."

"Is it your sister or your sweetheart who is after you and wants to hold court?" sneered one of the gipsies, anxious to be rid of her.

Hans rose to his feet. Had it been the other one he would have used his tongue and sent her about her business. Now he could only stand and stare. He put away the bottle, looked at his untidy clothes, passed his hand over the bandage on his head, and felt very much humiliated that things should be as they were.

"Come with me. Is that your pocket-book?" She picked it up and placed it in his inside breast pocket. Hans grinned in a shamefaced sort of way at the two angry gipsies, but the next moment he followed her.

At this very moment Martha's brother was rushing about, hunting for his sister. He visited all the lodging-houses and every store in town. He did not dare go home without her. He was afraid she might

get into all sorts of mischief if she were allowed to go about alone.

It turned out worse than anyone could dream, for the next day, when finally he did spy her on the street, she was with Hans Lia. They walked on either side of his new horse. And when the brother spoke to them, they said they were engaged, and were to be married very soon.

FAR up among the hills there is a small farm. The buildings are old and drab. Only a few strips of land here and there between rocks and bogs are cultivated. But smoke rises from the little cottage and in the field Hans is ploughing with a small black fjord horse. Spring has come at last even up here. The birches are in bud. The little wagtails hop along in the furrows after Hans, picking at the freshly turned soil. "Gee-up, Blackie!" The plough threatens to stop from time to time, but the little thin-legged horse pulls with all his might and drags it on and on. The song of the cuckoo is heard in the south.

Hans wondered if Martha would soon call him in to dinner. For nearly two years he had puzzled and pondered over the strange fact that he and Martha were married—that such a fine lady as Martha should throw herself away and move out into the backwoods with such a brigand as he—but don't think for a moment that she sat in the house, listlessly, and fretted over what she had done. Of course, it was a rascally thing to break so hastily with the other one; but when he became acquainted with Birit, who could have thought that the finest girl in the parish would come one day and actually throw herself into his arms? What could be more honourable than to separate oneself from that which is inferior? And now Birit had gone to America, and the Lord bless her wherever she was; for there she would not stand in the way of anybody.

But then, there was himself—God help us! It was easy enough to promise and swear that he would become an honest, respectable man, so that Martha would not have any sorrow on his account. But we human beings are not all made of the same stuff. One is like a Bible and another only wind and weather. As for Martha, she was always right, and there was hardly anything she did not understand. And he—and he! “Well, Blackie, I suppose you’d better stop and rest awhile”

Hans turned around where he stood, between the handles of the plough, wiped the perspiration from his forehead, looked at the grey, yellowish sky in the west, and nodded his head. No, they were not made of the same stuff. Martha wanted to save every shilling, and he would rather earn a dollar to-day, lose it to-morrow, and earn two again when luck came his way. That was the thing they could not agree upon. When he was a fisherman, shortly after their marriage, an enormous school of herring one day came up the fjord. He set his net out at Hutra, and, in one night, was as rich as a savings bank. The following day there was a wind-storm off shore. The herring went out to sea again and he stood there the same beggar as before. The one thing was good, the other was still better. Martha was on the point of crying, while he felt like throwing his hat into the air and shouting “Hurrah! The sea gives and the sea takes again!” Unless one wave dashed sky high and the other sank into the night again, sailing would not be such a pleasure. However, Martha had her way. He sold the net, and bought the only little farm they could find which was within their means. Martha and the good Lord were the only persons who seemed to know what benefit it was to anyone to go there

day after day and dig in a piece of stony ground far away from any other human being.

But then again—trading, of course, is trading. It reminds one somewhat of throwing out a fishing-net. A trade may act like a glass of brandy with pepper. It may fill a person with so much foolishness that he feels like throwing back his head and shouting. To trade is not to earn these shillings. No, it is like tossing your neighbour up in a blanket. It is to make him believe that an old worn-out nag is in reality a prince of England. The minister calls it swindling. Well, perhaps it is. But it is too bad the good Lord should be so set against a little deceit like that ; for it is so jolly. To send away a sensible man with a nose twice as long as he thinks it is—why, it is like dancing at a wedding. It is the same with swearing. It tastes on the tongue like a good drink of brandy or a fresh chew of tobacco. But, of course, Martha was right. And in time he would have to become a model man and an example to others—even he, since Martha seemed to have got it into her head that he must.

If only one were not so shut in ! Hills cut off the view in every direction. One could not see a neighbour, nor the mountains to the west, nor the fjord where the wide world came and went under white or weather-beaten sails. It seemed hard to draw breath. Here one's mental horizon no longer took in a province, but was confined to a gloomy stall. One would end by having a restless craving for a larger outlook, for a little fire in the blood, for excitement, for something breezy that would snatch off the hat, even if it were only a good fight. Then one day something began to call him—yes, it called him. He would wake up at night and hear it. When the sun sank into the sea

he would hear the same call. Did it come from the air, or out of his pocket, or was it the call of a living being without a name?—Move along there, Hans! Go to this place and that! Yes—and he would have to go, even though he were ever so much married to Martha Ersland. And then, one day, when he was ready to return home and approached the house—— “No, Blackie, gee-up again!”

“Come in to dinner,” was heard from the cottage door.

Martha had learned from experience that Hans would come when it happened to suit his fancy, so she sat down at the spinning-wheel again and made it hum while the sun streamed in over the newly scrubbed floor, strewn with spruce branches.

Martha still looked like a young girl. She was ruddy and slender and supple. There were no flowers in the window, no costly clock upon the wall. There were only a table, a couple of benches, and a chair or two. Soon after she had moved to this house she received word from her brothers that the bureau and commode and bed which belonged to her had been placed out in the yard, and that she might have them whenever she liked. She replied that as they had helped themselves to all the rest, they might as well keep these also. Rumour had a way of penetrating even to this out-of-the-way place, and she knew they were saying that she would end some day upon the highway with a pack on her back. Perhaps they were right, but it would take two to settle that matter.

As for Hans, she did not marry him as a result of a long period of deliberation. It is possible to look over a precipice so long that one is gripped by a desire to jump over. She did not know yet whether



she had landed on her feet, and whether there was solid ground for her to stand upon. She went about in a curious sort of delirium—Hans saw to that. She never knew in the morning what he would be up to before evening. If one has a husband of whom one thinks a great deal, there is not much time for thinking about oneself, especially if he is like a skittish horse that travels along very quietly one moment, but, the next, becomes unmanageable.

Steps were heard outside. The door was opened, and there stood Hans in his shirt-sleeves, bareheaded and perspiring. His eyes twinkled. No doubt he was thinking of something amusing which was to be kept from Martha.

They ate hurriedly the simple meal of porridge and milk and said nothing. He wiped his brown beard, and gave her a side glance now and then as if to see if her countenance indicated clear weather. When she sat down at the spinning-wheel, and he had filled his pipe, he came over to Martha, put his arms around her, and asked, in his very best manner, if she knew where the matches were.

"Go and look for yourself in the kitchen," she said, and remained at the spinning-wheel.

"Well, I suppose I'll have to finish ploughing that field," he said, after his pipe was lit.

"But the mare hasn't had time to finish eating yet."

He went out.

When thus he became tender and wanted to caress her, Martha could expect that something unpleasant would happen before evening.

She heard him drive over the field, and, a little later, when she stood at the window, she saw the poor horse

tugging away at the plough as if he were about to drop from exhaustion.

She made up her mind she would go to the barn before she went to bed and comfort the poor horse with an extra measure of oats.

The evening came, and from the mild spring sky a light blue twilight spread over forest and hill-side. Hans came in and ate his evening meal as usual, lit his pipe, but soon became restless and went out again.

"I suppose you are through for to-day," she called after him.

"I think I'll harrow," he said, "then I am done with it."

"But the poor beast—do you want to drive Blackie to death?"

"Don't worry about that," he said, and went toward the barn, whistling.

Soon he drove the tired animal to the field in the twilight and began to harrow.

A half moon appeared over the mountain ridge in the north. From the direction of Hermostad bay, which was still covered with ice, came the song of the grouse. But what had got into the head of Hans that made him want to work so late at night?

A stranger with a pack on his back came to the house and asked for Hans. Martha directed him to the field, where Hans could be heard but could no longer be seen.

Finally, it became so dark that she had to light a lamp. Then she went out to call him, and said that if he had any sense left he would not make the poor beast work any more to-day.

Just then Hans came in with the harness over his shoulder, and whistled louder than before.

"Where is Blackie?" she asked.

"Blackie is all right," he said. "The stranger bought her."

"Have you sold the horse, now in the midst of the spring work?"

"I suppose I can buy another," he said. "And now I am through with the harrowing."

"And Blackie did not get her oats," she mused.

"I understand there is a horse over in the Vassby district," he said, "and the person who wants it must lose no time." He brushed by her and went into the house.

"You are surely not thinking of going anywhere to-night?"

"There's money to be made, Martha. Get me a clean shirt."

"Money to be made, yes," she said, scornfully, bringing out the shirt, "and brandy to be had."

Hans grinned. "Yes, of course, brandy!"

She sat and stared at him while he changed his clothes. Perhaps she should have made ready a basket of food for his journey: but she had not the energy. Perhaps she should have begged him also not to start out until morning; but she only pressed her lips together. When these fits came over him, his eyes looked as if he were a hundred miles away. She might as well try to catch a salmon with her hands as to try to keep him at home.

"Are you cold?" he asked, as he buttoned his coat and made ready to leave.

"Cold?"

"Yes, because your chair is shaking so."

"Is that likely?" she said with a nervous laugh.

"Good luck on your journey!"

Hans went out into the night

She did not look after him, but remained seated and listened to the steps which grew fainter and fainter.

She turned out the light, intending to go to bed; but went to the window and remained standing there for some time. Down in the lowlands there was grass and flowers, but up here in the hills there was still frost at night, and the half moon seemed to amuse itself by ploughing through the cold, grey clouds.

What is troubling you, Martha—are you having a bad time of it? She dried her eyes, then suddenly clenched her fists and stamped on the floor. She was certainly not having a good time. A brook murmured and trickled alone out there in the darkness, and she, herself, became so lonely at night! But why should her tears flow? Away with tears!

She turned around and stared into the dark room. If you were to go to the minister now, Martha, he would offer you plenty of kind advice; and to-morrow his wife would tell half the neighbourhood, and especially the forester at Myr.

And the minister would say that you should pray the good Lord for grace and help—then some way would be found with Hans. But there it is again—that way you should be able to find for yourself.

No doubt there are some of us upon whom the great powers above place burdens, heavier upon one than another. If it turns out badly this time, doubtless it will turn out worse the next. Then perhaps you will become tender and begin to pity yourself and pray for help? Well, I suppose some would do that. But

closes her eyes and dreams that perhaps, some day, it might become just as peaceful in the cottage. She knew where the cradle would stand. And it would not be very long before the little new-comer could say "mother."

Then there would be one more—several more—boys and little rosy-checked girls. Perhaps these would be the best reins on Hans. It ought to be possible to work and put aside a little in the next few years, so there would be something to spend on a couple of the oldest boys to help them get up in the world, at least as high as the forester at Myr.

There—now she is through for the day. As she closes the barn door she actually has a desire to bid good-night to everything and everyone in there, for, in there, she feels like another human being.

The sad part of it was that she had now been married two years and still there was no sign of a little one. And she had put aside several yards of very fine cloth, ready to cut into little dresses and bandages.

Two days passed and Hans did not come. The third day she could do nothing but stand at the window. The fourth day, towards evening, she could contain herself no longer. She put on her wraps and walked down the path which wound desolately between the mountains and over bogs.

She had gone some distance when she stopped and listened in the bluish spring darkness. She heard only the song of the grouse and the murmur of the brooks. She dared not turn around. There was a catch in her throat. Wearily she wandered on. She came to the last hill, from which the open country could be seen, and the fjord under the mountains to the west twinkled in the moonlight. Lights from farm buildings were seen here and there. She saw

the Ersland farm, the parsonage, and Myr. But she dared not turn around. She went farther. Occasionally she would meet someone, but she was not the sort of person who would ask if they had seen Hans. Still she had not the courage to turn around. She did not dare to go home and remain alone with herself and the night up there among the hills.

At last she reached the church, and there she remained standing. One ought not to stay too long near a churchyard so late at night, but this time it could not possibly be worse than at home. She took hold of the iron gate to see if it was locked. It opened, creaking from rust. She clenched her teeth and went inside. Soon she found herself near her mother's grave, above which there stood a small black wooden cross. She sat down, folded her hands over her knees, and rocked forwards and backwards.

"Mother, I am so unhappy, I should like to move down here to you. Can you tell me who will help a poor lonely woman that no one in the world cares about?"

The weather vane on the church spire creaked as it was turned by the wind. She started and looked around. It was as if this city of the dead—these homes which were only mounds of earth, each with its cross—these people who lay there with their eyes closed—it was as if she could see and feel how it would be when, some day, she should lie there and listen to one thing and another—to a hymn, perhaps, without melody and without words, but a hymn nevertheless, which would sound throughout the ages, and which exists only for the dead.

Toward midnight she wandered back over the deserted path and finally reached the lonely farm.

The next day Hans came riding into the barn-yard upon a large bay horse. He dismounted, led the horse to the door, and shouted:

"Martha, come out!"

She stepped to the window so that he might see that she was there, but she did not go out.

While standing at the window she caught a glimpse of his face. His eyes were red and protruding.

Hans put the horse in the stable and approached the house, but remained standing outside the door. He, who the last day or two had begun to long for home, now found it hard to enter. When finally he had brought himself to open the door, he saw Martha sitting at the spinning-wheel. She did not look up. Upon the table there was no food.

"You may be sure there is going to be a fine horse on the farm now," said Hans, trying to be merry; but the spinning-wheel continued to spin and Martha did not look up.

When he had changed his clothes in the little bedroom he entered the living-room again, and said.

"Is there anything to eat in the house?"

Martha was pale. She cleared her throat, but continued to spin, and did not look up.

"Have you lost your tongue?" He sat down upon a bench and looked at her. Still she did not raise her eyes toward him. Her eyes had a strange far-away look, as if she were altogether alone in the room. She actually began to croon.

He waited a moment. He felt an impulse to rear up and pound the table—to give her a beating in order to break her obstinacy—or, perhaps, to go out for another drinking bout. However, he did not have strength enough left for that. His desire for drink

had spent itself for this time. What he wanted above all, now, was to be on good terms with his wife again.

"You might give me a decent welcome, Martha," he said, "because whether you care or not, I have earned a pretty penny the last few days; and if you want the money to put in the bank—why, there it is." He took out a leather pocket-book and placed it upon the table.

Then he rose to his feet, went out and hitched up the new horse to the wagon, and began to haul manure.

At noon Martha called him. This time there was food upon the table, but he must eat alone. She was washing and scrubbing in the kitchen. Hans ate and talked, but not a word nor a sound did he receive in reply.

When night came they were compelled to share the only bed they owned, but she turned her face toward the wall, and she seemed to go to sleep immediately.

He lit his pipe, and smoked and thought and remained awake.

It is a fine wife you have, Hans, and it is to be expected that she should be high and mighty and should want to have her say in everything. Well, well—it is her turn to be domineering now, and perhaps it might do you good to be under the lash for a time, and to be humble, for some day you may want to get out and shake yourself a bit again.

He puffed out a thick cloud of tobacco smoke and began to smile.

Not until the third day after his return did Martha speak a word to him. It was while they were eating their noon-day meal together.



"Did you say I should go to the bank?" she asked, in a low tone

"Yes, there is fifty dollars in the pocket-book, there—if you care to take the trouble." He was bubbling over with happiness, because now, surely, the ice was broken. Toward evening she went out to the field where he was working and asked if there was anything she could do to help

"Well, now—I wouldn't have you work in the field," he said "But, you know, it does make the work seem lighter to have you near."

Later in the evening he followed her to the cow-stable. He was wonderfully attentive in every way, and even cleaned the stable for her.

He took particular delight in saying things that would make her laugh, but he knew also when to hold his tongue.

Sunday turned out warm and bright. Far below the ridge of hills, which shut off the view, was heard the sound of church bells. To-day Hans and Martha walked together over field and meadow and chatted about the spring work that had been done, and that which remained to be done. She thought it was so important—this matter of crops. And didn't she look wonderful in her blue Sunday dress with the red bodice! Hans must put his arm around her time and again. She said he was silly and pushed him away, and said he must remember they had neighbours, and the neighbours had a window in their house, too. Hans was so supremely happy to have such a wife, that if he had never before sworn to let liquor alone he did so now.

"Are you going to the fair this year?" she asked, and turned her face away.

Aha, he thought, something new is brewing

He answered in the most ingratiating manner, after stroking his beard out of his mouth.

"If you could arrange to go also and help, why, of course, we might be able to make a shilling or two."

"Hem," she said, and remained silent for a long time.

SEVERAL years passed. They worked and struggled together. They were friends and enemies, and each in turn had the upper hand. She got him to break new land and helped him, herself, to clear away stumps and stones. She urged him also to take in a newspaper, so that his thoughts might be occupied with something else than merely buying and selling. Everything went well for a time—until his fit came over him again, when he dropped everything and found an excuse to go away.

In a way, it was a comfort to Martha to learn that, though Hans would drink a great deal, it was preferably when others paid. He would trade and trade again, yet always he would come out ahead. It was only honour and reputation that he continually threw overboard. That folks said he was good for nothing only made him smile. He could not understand why Martha should be vexed over such a trifle.

When she was left alone up here on the farm among the hills, while he was away, busy with his own affairs, she would go about waiting and waiting, not any longer for him, but for the little one in the cradle, who never came. Now it was even of less use to stand at the window and stare.

She must swallow many bitter things and pretend she enjoyed it. More than once at the fair she must stand aside and see Hans taken to jail while

the folks from home followed at a distance and jeered. It pained her, but no one would think so, judging from her actions. It was worse—this matter of the child that did not come. It did not help to hold the head high and be strong. It was as if the most tender spot in her whole being were touched. She could only bow her head humbly and pray for help.

As time passed she managed to go to church more often. She saw her brothers enter, and felt that they sat in a pew near by. She felt also that the forester from Myr and his beautiful wife came in and sat down just across the aisle. But Martha bowed her head and looked in the hymn-book. These people became as nothing beside the great thing that held sway over her mind.

The congregation began to sing, and she sang also. It was the first time she had had anything to put into a hymn, and therefore it became a new experience to sing. The church became filled with an unearthly harmony. The entire congregation sang. Bald-headed men, blond, red-haired, dark, held their heads back and sang. Women, bowing their heads under their kerchiefs, some black, others bright coloured, sang still louder. All the people changed into hymns. Martha, herself, felt as if she rose in the air to a plane where her wishes were given wings. They took flight. They lifted themselves up into infinite space. They saw Him for whom she sang. "What do you want, woman?"

Martha sang the words of the hymn, but at the same time it seemed that her wishes up above sang their own song.

"Oh, Lord, I am a mother who has not yet had her first child. Am I unworthy? Try me then. Am I

too hard and wicked? If so I will change, when I have a cradle to croon over. Punish me with sickness. Make me penniless and poor. I can bear more than that, if You will only give me a little child to carry on my arm. Do You hear? Do You hear, You that are over all?"

The hymn still sounded, and Martha forgot all around her. She had sung herself up to the throne in the grand room, and about her was a great throng of other women. They knelt, just as she. They wore black kerchiefs, just as she. But the others were real mothers. They had children in the cradle, or at their breasts, or on their arm, at work or at play. They were here to pray that their children might prosper. Now, there was a new hymn. Now, words and wishes took wing. There was a chorus in which even the stars were lured to join. It was the song of the mothers.

Martha must stand aside. She had no one to pray for.

Thus, in thought, she would be carried far away. It happened at times she would come to herself again only when the people would brush by her while leaving the church because the service was at an end.

A person who lives so much alone on a lonely farm up among the hills can easily think and brood over one thing until it finally becomes alive.

If she had had a child a reasonable time after the wedding it would now be four years old. It was this child Martha began to see. It was a little boy. He was named Peter after her father. He toddled after his mother, in and out of the house, and asked questions about such things as children usually ask about. In the evening he would carry the milk pail

for her to the barn, and while she sat resting her head against the warm cow and milked, he would stand beside her and chatter.

When Hans came home she would stare at him with a strange, far-away look. It was as if this man belonged to another world than she.

The years passed by. It seemed to Hans his wife had changed so much that often he did not recognise her.

One day he came driving home to the farm and called from some distance :

" Martha, Martha, are you there ? "

" What is it ? " She came to the door to see if he had been drinking.

" Are you ready to move ? " he said, jumping down and tying the lines together.

" Move ? " she said.

" Yes, now there will be something else to do than to sit here, Martha mine. Now you are to be the lady of Dyrendal."

" Are you out of your wits ? Dyr—endal ! " She took hold of the door to steady herself.

" Yes, the big place north of here. Now it is mine. The biggest estate in the district—timber, six tenants—it is all mine now."

When he finally went in the house became full of excitement. He paced up and down the floor, and tried to light his pipe while telling Martha about the auction. There was no doubt about it—to buy the place at the price he had paid was highway robbery. There was a salmon fishery. And the timber alone was worth more than he had paid.

Hans Lia, so to speak, had set his net for a big haul again, and had put all that they owned at stake. Of course, it was not impossible the whole

thing would go to sea, as had happened before, and he would stand there a pauper in the morning. Martha would not throw her hat in the air. What if things should go wrong! Martha could not sleep

THEY moved one day early in the spring. Their belongings did not make a very large load. There was the table, the bed, some benches, a few kettles and cups, and a couple of bundles of clothes. There was also a large box in which something clattered about and said "uff! uff!" Back of the wagon there were three cows and four sheep, which Hans tried to keep together with a small birch branch. On the load sat Martha, driving.

It was not a moving which would tend to create profound respect for the new owners of Dyrendal.

The road led over high forest-clad ridges. At last they were on the down slope and saw the plain far below them dotted with groups of farm buildings. First there was a string of fishermen's cottages along the shore of the wide fjord, which looked almost as if they had been washed up by a wave. Back of these the dark church tower rose out of a clump of fir-trees. The plain widening out toward the east was thickly settled, with here and there ridges of hills and strips of forest. But those who were moving knew there was more. Valleys, many miles long, extended between the greyish-brown mountain ridges toward the north-east, with rivers and large estates and dairy farms from which the ram's-horn sounded in the summer-time.

This was their destination. Martha thought: "We move in to-day, but God alone knows if we don't



have to pack up and move out with shame and sorrow to-morrow."

At last they could see Dyrendal on the plain below. It lay on an elevated bit of ground along the birch-covered hills toward the east, and it dominated both land and sea. The house was painted yellow, and paraded a long row of white-framed windows on the side facing the west. The rafters extended far over the walls. It was truly a gentleman's house. Before the house were shade trees, and, behind it, were large red barns and stables resting upon high, white-painted foundations.

"Well, well—and you are to be the mistress here now, after the great lady," thought Martha; but she shook her head. She mused—Hans had played many a mad prank; but this, no doubt, was the worst.

"Why—there is smoke coming from the chimney!" she burst out. Had not Hans told her the house was vacant?

"Well, I declare, have you ever seen the like!" Hans looked puzzled, and stared in the direction of the house.

They passed several farms. The folks stood outside and gazed at them. All eyes took measure of the load, as if to say: "Great Heavens! Is this the new master of Dyrendal!"

Martha raised her chin, and only cast side glances: "Good Lord, what does it concern these people, anyway? We are what we are."

When they had crossed the river and entered the grounds of Dyrendal, Martha jumped down off the wagon, took a handful of earth and rubbed it between her fingers. "Clay," she said, and looked thoughtfully at Hans.

Leading up to the house was an avenue of tall asp-trees. Martha sat upon the load and looked up at the budding crowns.

"These are fine trees," she said.

"Yes, we can make good use of them!" said Hans. "They will make several armfuls of wood."

"Wood!" she said.

"Yes; lumber, too. If we saw them up there will be many good planks."

"I guess we'll wait awhile," said Martha.

Hans could see at once that this was a subject Martha understood better than he, and the matter was never referred to again.

This was a great day for Hans. Since the purchase of Dyrendal, Martha's poor brain had been in a whirl, and, to-day, worse than ever before. It was as if he held her over a fire and let her kick and struggle. It is true enough that she always was right, and was twelve times as good as he, but for all that he might have the fun of holding her over the fire a bit and letting her kick.

First, there were the two maids he had engaged without even telling her about it. They had prepared cream porridge, and set the table. Martha stared in wonderment—where did the table-cloth come from, and the spoons, and all the kitchen ware? All that Hans had bought at the auction. But why should he tell her all at once? It was even worse when she wanted to help put the cows in the cow-stable. There stood fifteen cows, and the maids said Hans had bought them together with the farm. And to think that she had dreaded to begin on a big farm without help and without live stock! She heard a neigh in the horse-stable, and when she went in, there stood

six horses stamping in their stalls, besides the one they had driven.

"Who owns these?" she asked.

"They belong to us," said Hans.

"Belong to us? Listen, Hans; be serious."

"They belong to us as sure as I stand here."

She stared at him, shook her head, and went out. She did not believe him. But if it were so, after all, then he must have gone in debt over his ears, and all this splendour hung as if by a thread.

Then she followed him to the wagon-shed. There stood farm wagons, sleds, a sulky, a cart, and—could she believe her eyes—nearest the wall, a Surrey.

"Who owns that?" she asked, and pointed in the direction of the Surrey.

"Hem!" Hans stroked his beard. "I suppose most everything you find here is mine." He chewed his tobacco cud vigorously, while his eyes twinkled. He would not have exchanged this moment, no, not for a horse or a cow.

"Have you—have you bought the Surrey for us, Hans?" She was pale, and her eyes were fixed upon him.

"Yes. Don't you think the master and mistress of Dyrendal should ride to church as befits their station?"

She stared at him, and leaned against the wall to save herself from falling.

"I fear the first ride will be to the poorhouse," she said. "And if I did not know it before, I see it now—you are stark mad."

She shook her head, and walked slowly toward the house.

When he came in he found her sitting upon a chair.

She pondered long, wiped her eyes, and sobbed. Suddenly she burst out weeping, and groaned loudly :

"To-day I regret one thing, Hans."

"Is that so? You regret one thing?"

"Yes—that like a fool I should have married a man who is out of his wits."

"That was too bad, Martha," said Hans, filling his pipe.

"We owe for every nail in the wall here, and you go and buy—buy a Surrey."

"Well, you see, Martha——"

"And we must pay out thousands of dollars before midsummer, and next autumn we must pay out thousands again. And here we are to-day, and have thrown our last few shillings out of the window. But you—you buy—a Surrey!"

"Well, that was foolish, I must say."

"Be sensible, and listen to me, Hans. Sell immediately. Try to save the little we did have. And let us move away from here this minute."

"Oh, well—I suppose we can stay here overnight," said Hans, striking a match and lighting his pipe.

It seemed to Hans that he had roasted Martha over the fire long enough, so he began to tell her many things he had not told her before.

To be sure, there was some risk, taken altogether—there was no denying that. But no one knew that before the auction he had been through the woods with a forester from the lumber-yard in the city. And the woods—most of the woods—were practically sold to the lumber company for more than enough to cover both the first and the second payment, so she could feel perfectly safe for at least a couple of nights.

Of course, there was also quite a large mortgage; but the salmon fishery could be rented for almost enough to take care of that. And if he should want to sell the two largest tenancies, they would bring a neat sum—yes, more than half enough to pay off the entire mortgage. Could she understand that? And did it seem to her now that he was altogether out of his wits?

And the farm was bought as it stood, with fixtures and tools. The fifteen cows and six horses were thrown in. And wagons and sleds and harnesses and everything. All went with the farm. The Surrey—well, of course, that was separate. The bailiff had put up the Surrey for sale, but there wasn't a man in the district who wanted to bid on anything so stylish as a Surrey. Brandt of Landegaard and the doctor and the minister were not there, and, no doubt, they had carriages enough already. No one would make a bid, so the bailiff thought the best he could do would be to throw in the Surrey with the rest. "Do you understand now, Martha? It did not cost me a shilling."

Furthermore, it was not absolutely necessary that she should ride in it to-day or to-morrow. It did not eat anything, and might as well stand there. When the day should come that they had paid up everything and had a shilling in the bank, they might perhaps take a ride in it.

Martha remained seated, and continued to stare vacantly. She turned her eyes toward Hans. If she could only believe all this! This madcap, looked upon by everyone as a drunkard and a brawler and a scoundrel, would he be man enough to see this thing through?

At any rate, it sounded sufficiently trustworthy,

so that she rose from her chair, and looked around as if she had made up her mind to stay. After all, there was perhaps so much truth in it that it was worth the trouble to brace up and take hold.

It is true enough—the first few weeks neither Hans nor Martha slept well. It was so sudden—all this coming to them. And they were not quite safe in the saddle either. So many things might happen. It is one thing to have good prospects, and another to have the money on the table. It was almost as if the large yellow house did not have a firm foundation. At night, when they had gone to bed, it was as if the whole thing might begin to slide down hill as soon as they closed their eyes.

Two maids and two hired men—it cost money. And now Martha had eighteen milk cows. In time, large, white-scrubbed tubs of yellow butter accumulated in the milk-house, and upon the shelves long rows of cheese. Martha wanted to take these to the village herself.

It was not until half of the money for the timber had come, and the first payment on the farm had been made, that they had enough of a feeling of security to pause and look around.

The first thing they discovered was that they had moved into a strange house. Here had lived other folk with other moods, and something of them continued to haunt the house. The wall-paper bore the marks of picture-hooks. But wall-paper for simple country people—that was not suitable. There were large, grand rooms, but they were rooms for gentle folk. Many remained empty. One room was furnished with the bed and table and benches they

brought with them. The windows were tall and solemn, accustomed to curtains—but did Martha have curtains to hang up? Some of the window-panes bore the marks of merry officers' parties—names and verses scratched with diamonds. There was Van Kaltenborn, Elieson, Seierstad. Something strange always appeared and poked fun at the simple folk who had come to the house. As for the window-panes—of course, they might be changed some day.

It was worse with the large garden. Now, in May, the apple-trees and the cherry-trees began to take on a splendour of white and pink flowers; but such gardens were only for the great people in these parts. Martha had seen a garden like that at the parsonage—but did she and Hans have time to walk about on the paths, and drink tea in the shady bowers, and talk refined talk? Hans preferred to steal around outside the garden. He knew very well that the former master of Dyrendal and his ladies no longer wandered about on the paths in there, but nevertheless he felt a sort of respect, and his hand instinctively went up to his hat in the presence of his own garden. If only there had been time to look after all these bushes and trees. They must wait awhile, at least, with all these flowers until the place was paid for, and they had a shilling in the bank. No doubt people who passed by would stop and smile.

There was one thing, however, at Dyrendal that simple country folk had no need of denying themselves, and that was the view. The farm lay on a high bit of ground, and overlooked a little kingdom of its own. The landscape lay spread out on the plain below—bogs, strips of forest, and farms with green fields traversed by avenues of trees, fences, and paths. It began at the great fjord below the snow-



capped mountains in the west and continued with a bay which extended east below other mountains in the north. The bay narrowed into a long sound with farms on both sides staring at one another, and the sound ended in a lake which extended to the very grounds of Dyrendal. Into this lake would come salmon and herring. In the winter-time it would freeze, and be covered with smooth ice. But now, during the warm spring days, the dark surface was like a mirror. In it one could see yellow and red houses stand on their heads between the green banks and quiet tree-covered hills. In the bottom was the bright sun and the blue sky.

As Hans stood near the flag-pole looking upon all this, the picture became so large that it was difficult to take it all in. It was no longer merely the fjord, where messengers from distant parts came and went under white and weather-beaten sails. There were so many roads with traffic. There were teams and travellers afoot on both sides of the sound. There were moving objects in the long, tree-lined avenues leading to the church. There was life and movement on the shores of the lake and, toward the west, on the shores of the great fjord. Perhaps some of these travellers were on their way to Dyrendal to see him. Something was happening constantly. It was as if a large and curious book lay open before him, in which there was much to read and much to marvel at. All of the sounds from the plain below were washed up here. A steamer on the bay whistled; a horse beyond the sound neighed, a plank fell on a farm far beyond the church; shouts and laughter were heard. It was as if all the life of the parish rose into the air and was wafted toward Dyrendal. It was noticeable that one was nearer the ocean; the air

was more moist and had a salty taste; the western mountains, with their snow-covered tops, were often shrouded by a veil of mist; and, toward evening, the sky over the island-studded fjord was a paradise of multicoloured clouds. Over the whole breathed the spirit of spring. The odour of bursting buds, of herring from the beach, and flowers from the hills, was something so strong that it caused the nostrils to quiver and the soul to burst into song.

Furthermore, at this season of the year, the salmon fishing was full of adventure, which filled every hour of the day with excitement. North of the house, the grounds sloped abruptly to the shore of the lake, and ended in a point of land upon which all sorts of sea birds forgathered.

From the outermost end of the point a fishing-net was stretched out into the lake, and a rope attached to the farther end of the net went straight to the shore. It disappeared in the door of a drab cottage on the bank, and here sat John Rø, an old greybeard, and held the other end with an expression as if each moment he expected something important to happen. The net formed a triangle with the shore line. Just beyond the net a ladder rose from the lake, and on top of this stood Peter Eriksen in his yellow oilskin coat and southwester, and looked straight down as if he had lost something down there on the bottom. It might happen on rare occasions that his comrade in the cottage would say a word to him. Peter would answer, but would never raise his eyes, because down there on the bottom were things of greater importance. He is on the look out for a lightning-like shadow, preferably many. A white surface, many times as large as the floor of a cottage, has been placed on the bottom, so that everything that moves in the water

above it can be easily seen. Peter stands on his ladder all day long. His father before him had stood in the same way and had died stone blind. Now Peter is a greybeard. His broad back is round, but his eyesight is still very good. The time passes, and he looks and looks. It becomes roasting hot in the middle of the day, and it would seem that he would be more comfortable without his oilskins, but if the very crack of doom should sound, he would remain there motionless. If, for a single moment, he should take away his eyes from the white surface down there, the salmon might slip out again, and heaps of silver money would go with him.

John Rø sits in the cottage, and is just as intent upon his special task. He, like Peter, is a cottager under Dyrendal. In his youth he was a guardsman, and stood watch at the King's palace, despite his small stature. He can light his pipe with one hand and cook coffee with the same hand, while with the other he has a strong grip on the rope. When the salmon comes the devil is loose—then he must be quick as lightning, and haul in until he gets the far end of the net ashore. It happened once that he had tied the rope to a tree on the hillside just outside the cottage. His wife came out to him with food—it happened to be about the time she was to have a little one. Just at that moment Peter Enksen shouted "Haul in!" John became excited, and rushed to the rope. In doing so, he ran afoul of his wife. She rolled down the bank into the lake, and since that day has been like another person. Now John keeps the rope in the cottage, and never drops it for a moment.

As Peter Eriksen stands on the ladder, and the sun beats down upon him, it happens sometimes that his

thoughts are far away. It is the salmon he follows on his lightning-like journeys all over the wide world. Last winter he shot through the great ocean and along coasts so far away that one can hardly form an idea of the distance. Then spring came into the sea, and he began to long for the north. He remembers the deep and quiet fjords, perhaps, also, the fresh waters of some playful river where he crept out of the egg and then frolicked as a shining little salmon-trout until the longing for the sea came over him. Now, however, he has turned northward again toward home, and dashes like a shooting-star through the sea. He makes wild rushes into fjord and sound, and passes by familiar cliff walls and headlands. He disports himself in a cool river formed by mountain streams ; but it is not the right one. There is an idea in his head about a waterfall, where one can leap and wriggle in the sunshine and foam, and he remembers, farther up, a certain fly which he has now invited a playfellow to enjoy with him. Peter waits expectantly. He is almost moved and ready to say that such an acquaintance is welcome home again. Now the home-coming salmon rushes into the sound and along the east shore. He is approaching. Watch carefully ! There is a shadow down there in the green water. But it is only a haddock or a cod, or, perhaps, only a crab. That is not worth bothering with. The day passes. It requires a great deal of patience. John Rø changes places with him. A new day passes, and both stare until their eyes are red ; but nothing happens.

Then Peter must take up his watch on the ladder again. He rubs his eyes with his pitch-covered hand. The bottom down there is white. The water is light green, and the sun plays upon the golden-green

nipples of the surface. The wavelets splash against the ladder. Shouts and laughter sound from the shore, but Peter does not look up from one end of the day to the other. He stands there keeping watch until every muscle of his body aches and the old eyes smart. There is nothing to do but watch. Suddenly a chill runs through him. Then a fire burns in his entire body. He gets a glimpse of a grey streak shooting through the water like a flash of lightning. It must be—ah! there is one more! Then a great mysterious foreboding comes over him. He feels like singing hosanna or repeating the Lord's prayer; but all his emotion gathered itself into one wild shout:

"Haul in!"

"Haul in!" shrieks John Rø, and now the devil is loose. The little cottage seems in danger of toppling over as a result of the commotion inside. The rope becomes alive. The net bends toward the shore. Peter climbs down from his look out, stiff in every joint, and steps into the boat which is tied to the ladder. The net must be emptied. When the fish are gathered upon the beach there are heaps of shining objects—heaps of silver money—at last! But Peter Eriksen and John Rø are entitled to only their share. The biggest part goes to the master of Dyrendal.

At this time, when Hans and Martha had everything at stake, they would keep the window towards the water open, and would listen to the shout of the fishermen. It was like a lottery. Each time the shout was to them as the shout of rescue. Many a day as they sat at dinner and the welcome sound "Haul in!" sang through the house, there would immediately be new life in both of them. Hans would rush out, and run down the hill with his mouth full of food, and, at

first, Martha could not control herself, but would follow at a distance.

Then it would be necessary for Hans to make a trip to the village, because he wanted to sell the salmon himself.

He did not go now for the purpose of meeting wild companions and of exposing himself to the temptation of drinking and fighting as formerly when he went to the fair. He sold the precious fish, and got his pocket-book full of bills without so much as cheating even a Swede. As a result of this, he began to conduct himself differently upon the street, and to look upon himself as belonging to another class of society than formerly.

He did not make himself ridiculous by imagining that he was a *grand seignior*, but his new grey suit of homespun had been pressed at the dyers' so that the nap was smooth and the cloth had a dark, deep lustre. And he did not put on a tall hat that would make him look like a preacher; but a new one of brown plush with a wide brim. However, it was comfortable, especially in the summer-time, to wear light shoes with elastic sides, instead of the heavy boots that reached to the knees; and the first time he tripped across the street the soles of them began to creak, so that the big, broad-shouldered fellow fell into a new manner of walking, and was compelled to look around to see if folks did not think his clothes were too fine.

Naturally he must visit the St. Hans midsummer fair, and this time he brought three beautiful horses from his own farm. He did not live in a dirty cattle-pen, but stopped at Findseths', where they had sheets on the bed and it cost twelve shillings a night. He might take a drink with old horse dealers

to celebrate a sale, but he would not put the bottle to his mouth and turn it bottom side up. He remembered that when he went home he would have to go up a long avenue lined with trees, and, although he was not a Colonel, he was the master of Dyrendal.

In the autumn money came again from the lumber company, and they made the second payment on the farm. There was only the mortgage left. If they did not go to sleep outright, the large farm with the fishery and the live stock surely ought to be able to take care of that.

Both Martha and Hans now felt they could stop and take breath, because, at last, Dyrendal seemed to rest upon a secure foundation, and they might allow themselves at least the luxury of sleeping at night.

Each time Martha had been to town she brought home something done up in a neat package that Hans was not permitted to see until it pleased her to show it to him. One day she brought back a large clock in a brown case that reached from the floor to the ceiling. Another day it was a fine damask tablecloth, for use in case anyone should come to see them. Another day again, it was copper and tinware, bowls and cups for the kitchen.

"How much did you pay for that?" Hans asked.

"That does not concern you," she replied, not to be unkind, but because she had got it into her head that these things she and the butter would take care of without any aid from Hans.

To be sure Hans still had some authority at the farm. Timber was sawed, and carpenters came who began to bustle around in the house.

"What does that mean?" asked Martha, standing erectly with her arms hanging straight down and her eyes fixed upon him.

"That does not concern you," he replied, with a grin, strutting about and acting as if he were hiding great secrets.

The carpenters nailed new wainscoting over the old wall-paper in the living-room, and there was a pleasant odour of fresh lumber. Immediately it began to seem cosy. It was like another house. Martha knew that when Hans assumed control it was best not to interfere. When the wainscoting was finished, all must move into the kitchen, because now it was the painters' turn.

Naturally, it became rather crowded in the kitchen when the maids and hired men, besides the master and mistress, sat at table there. In the days of the former master of Dyrendal the workpeople ate in the servants' hall, a small red building at some distance from the house. But how could Martha and Hans find any pleasure in sitting alone in the big house? That was out of the question. They wished to be surrounded by their people, indoors as well as outdoors.

When the carpenters and painters had left and a reasonable time had been allowed for the fresh paint to dry, Martha one day opened the door to the living-room and invited all to look in. The doorway at once became full of curious heads. There had been, indeed, a great change. The wainscoting was grey with brown moulding. The ceiling was white. The floor was brown like the moulding. There was a new long table along the wall, and new benches, including a short bench up near the window which served as the seat of honour. All these were brown like the floor. Everything was in grand style. It was, indeed, a house for a big-wig, but also a house simple country people could take comfort in. And Martha said :



"I think the long table will be large enough for all of us; but one thing I want to have clearly understood—anyone who does not take his shoes off will not be allowed in here. He will have to sit in the kitchen."

She smiled in order not to seem too harsh, but they all knew very well that when the mistress said anything she meant it.

The winter, with its snow-storms, passed, and when spring had come again the garden began to run riot, worse than the year before, with flowers and other finery. There were branches so burdened with pomp and splendour that they bent down over the windows in order to look in and show themselves. The two inside bowed as if to say—"Well, we'll have to make the best of it." To be sure, the place was not yet paid for, and they had no money in the bank to speak of, but they were there, and they were just who they were, and they did not need to ask favours of anyone. Hans now had a rocking-chair, in which he sat on Sundays in the middle of the floor, rocking gently while he smoked his long-stemmed pipe slowly. He used sliced plug tobacco, which made the smoke strong and pleasant.

As Martha went about her household duties she began to notice that Hans would look at her in a questioning manner. They had been married ten or twelve years, and it seemed to occur to Hans for the first time that something was lacking. Perhaps he was thinking of a little one who would some day crawl upon his knee and say papa. Or perhaps he felt so secure now that it seemed the time had come to think of an heir.

Martha bowed her head, and dared not meet his eyes. She had a strange feeling of weakness. If

Hans should happen to make any reference to the matter this masterful woman would sink down upon a chair and begin to cry.

There was a good catch of salmon that year. But when the familiar shout "Haul in" rang through the house, Hans and Martha did not rush down to the water as formerly. They felt too secure for that. Instead, they merely sent someone down to get the news.

Martha thought out many ways of occupying Hans so that he would not be looking constantly at her when he sat in the rocking-chair. She persuaded him to take some newspapers again, and urged him to read about politics. There would soon be a local election. Was not the master of Dyrendal as good as anybody else? Whenever she took butter to the village she would return, as formerly, with many wonderful things done up in all sorts of packages. One time there was almost a wagon-load—among other things, a sofa. It was for the other room. It seemed she had begun to furnish a front room in the large house. Another time she was unusually careful with her package. It was a tall mirror that reached almost from the floor to the ceiling. The frame was of mahogany, to match the sofa. She had been advised by the minister's wife. Returning from one of the trips to the village about Christmas-time, she walked up from the steamship wharf, although a horse and sleigh had been sent for her. She had come straight across the frozen lake, and walked very carefully, carrying something in her hand which, with much ceremony, was at last brought safely into the house. It was a hanging-lamp for the front room, with many glass prisms.

"Well, well—what have you paid for that?" asked

Hans, altogether bewildered by the many fine things Martha had brought home.

"That does not concern you!" she replied. If she and the butter had been able to pay for so much already, she thought they would be able to furnish the front room too.

AN old white-haired woman accompanied a twelve-year-old boy up the road leading to Dyrendal. They came from the fishing village on the shore of the fjord. The woman had a curved nose and sunken features. She was tall and slender, although she seemed to be well along in years, and walked with difficulty. The boy carried a small bundle of clothes under his arm. The hair that showed under his cap was blond—it might as well be called white. It was none other than Knut Hamren, who was on his way to Dyrendal to herd cattle, and the woman that accompanied him was his grandmother.

It is not so easy to leave home when one is twelve years old, even if one's grandmother accompanies one part of the way. But, of course, it was not altogether pleasant at home either, because mother had died last year, and there were five little ones in the tiny cottage. And this year father had married again, and a strange woman had taken the place of mother. It was lucky grandmother was still alive so that the little brothers and sisters had someone to go to for comfort. When Knut was about to leave home, his sister Gunhild took him aside and asked him to try to find a place for her also, although she was only nine years old.

"You may be sure some way will be found," he had said, because, being the oldest, he felt he was responsible for all the others.

Knut had two books in his bundle. One was entitled *The History of Napoleon* and the other *A Happy Marriage*. He had received them from an old tailor in exchange for a string of fish. After he had read them from cover to cover, his thoughts began to wander into strange paths.

"Now I think it will be best for me to turn around and go home," said the grandmother, and stopped.

"Oh, no!" the boy begged, for he dreaded to be left alone.

The grandmother looked in the direction of Dyrendal, which lay there among the hills great and powerful.

"Well, now—if you will only try to behave well, Knut——"

"Oh, I'll try to do the best I can."

"You must remember to say your prayers before you go to bed."

"Yes, of course, but can't you go a bit farther?"

"Then you must remember that it is big people you are going to work for now. You must thank them for everything, and you must be polite and do everything you are asked to do."

"Come with me a little farther, then," he begged. "You might go with me to Dyrendal, and they will invite you to have some coffee."

The old woman put her hand to her eyes and looked back. "It is so far to go back," she sighed. "And besides, it would not look very well—an old cottager's wife."

The boy blinked. For the first time it occurred to him that there might be places where his own grandmother could not go because she was not good enough.

"Then you must not talk and chatter all the time as you do at home. Remember that, Knut."

The boy promised he would not say a word from one end of the day to the other.

The old woman went a bit farther; then she stopped again.

"Well—good-bye now, Knut."

"Good——" The boy tried to swallow his tears.

"Come now, you must show that you are a real man. You must support yourself now, Knut, and then help the others who are smaller."

"Yes."

The grandmother turned around, and began to walk slowly toward the fjord again. Knut stood for a time and looked after her. It was not so certain that they would be kind to her at home when he was not there to look after things.

Then the little fellow trudged on, all his worldly possessions pressed tightly under his arm.

Knut had grown up out there beside the fjord, but always there had been something in his mind which said he would not live there when he became a man. He had been permitted several times to accompany his father into the country and up into the valleys where there were great fir forests with birds and animals and rivers and large farms. He had often thought—here I wish to live; here it is pleasant. Now he was on his way to just such a large farm; and yet he sniffled and wiped the tears out of his eyes.

This happened on a Sunday early in May, and in the living-room at Dyrendal Hans lay back in his rocking-chair in the middle of the room, his long-stemmed pipe in his mouth and a newspaper in his hands. The mistress sat near a window reading the

hymn-book, and one of the maids, Jonetta, sat at the long table writing a letter.

"Here comes a visitor," said Martha, looking out of the window

"Who can that be?" Hans looked up from his newspaper and sat erect. The fact is, Hans was always looking for something to happen. Perhaps it was a horse-dealer who happened to be passing by. Hans immediately became wide awake.

"Just wait a minute," said Martha, smiling and returning to her hymn-book.

There were steps in the kitchen. The door opened, and a little fellow dressed in light-grey clothes and a cap, with a bundle under his arm, sidled in. He jerked off his cap, bowed, and said, "Good afternoon." As this did not seem a sufficiently cordial greeting, he added, although this was his first visit, "And thanks for your hospitality!"

"Well, good afternoon, good afternoon," said Hans, looking at him sharply, while his eyes twinkled with good humour. "I believe this is the new overseer who is out walking."

The maid raised her head. Martha looked at the boy and smiled. Knut put one foot forward, and assumed the sort of pose grown men sometimes do when speculating about the weather. Oh, no, he would not say exactly that he was an overseer, he said.

No, of course not; but perhaps he was the bailiff, continued Hans with a very serious look.

The maid began to grin. The boy grew red in the face. He placed his foot farther forward in order to be more dignified.

"Well," he said, "I came here to herd the cows this summer, and whether you call me overseer or herd-boy it is all the same to me."

"Now you have someone who knows how to answer you," said Martha. She arose, and extended her hand to the boy.

"You are welcome," she said. "You might put down your bundle for a while. Perhaps you would like something to eat?"

"No; we had dinner just before we left."

"Anyway, you can sit down for a while!" Martha went back to her hymn-book and her chair at the window.

Hans continued to look at the boy. It did not happen often that such little men came to Dyrendal.

"Is it true that you are real smart in school?" he asked. "I believe it was the schoolmaster who said that you intended to go to the city to become a preacher."

Knut had promised his grandmother that he would not say a word from one end of the day to the other, but this was something that required an answer.

"Oh, no, I am through with that," he said, and slid up on the bench. As he sat there, his feet did not quite reach the floor.

"Is that so? You are through with that? But you did intend to do that—a few years ago?" Hans continued in a very serious manner, and he let his pipe go out.

"Yes; you see, there was a revival, and many people were converted out our way last year; but that is all over now."

Martha looked up from her hymn-book again. The maid was red in the face, and bent down over her letter; but there was something in her back that kept bobbing up and down.



"Perhaps you are not quite saved yourself, now?" asked HANS

"Oh, no, when one begins to think about these things, why——"

Martha must look out of the window

"But what do you intend to be now, when you are grown up?" continued HANS

"An officer"

"Well, well, well! Perhaps you intend to enter the school for non-commissioned officers?"

"Not at all," he said "Oh, no, you cannot become an officer that way. First you must study, and take a large number of examinations. Then you must go to the army school."

"Yes, exactly," HANS gasped. The little fellow talked as if he had all the money in the world to spend upon himself

"And when a person becomes an officer he must go out in the world—where there is war."

"Exactly so! You must get into a war," said HANS, striking a match

"And then, perhaps, you will be made a general. And then you can be with the King all day long"

"Well, I'll be——" HANS seemed to have lost his breath. He forgot the match and burned his fingers. "But have you never thought of becoming a king too?"

Knut, however, was so taken up with his own future prospects that he looked thoughtfully at the yellow evening sky outside, and continued.

"Oh, no, that cannot be done in these times. That was when Napoleon lived. Then it made no difference if a person was a simple cottager's boy, if only he had the stuff in him. If he could ride a horse and use a

sword it might easily happen that he would rise step by step until he became a king."

"Well, you take care, or you will go the same way," said Hans, and struck another match. "You'll see, you will not give up until you are a king yourself some day."

After the grown-ups had found something else to talk about, Knut slipped out and began to look around. Such a large farm! And all these buildings! That was different from the little place down there beside the naked sea, with a house and a barn about as large as two match-boxes. And all these big and little buildings were alive. The stabur was a man with a bag on his back straining his legs to bear up under it. The smithy up on the hill-side was a bad-tempered old woman. The pigsty back of the granary had a snout and could say "uff! uff!" There was still another building, before which he remained standing for some time. It was the large red building with white foundation. No doubt it was supposed to be the stable for the cows and horses, but in reality it was history that lay there and looked into the future. From the stable came the sound of horses chewing and stamping on the floor. Exactly in the same manner, no doubt, the sound of chewing and stamping once came from the encampments of Napoleon and Cæsar.

Hans also went out to look around. When he returned, he said in a very serious tone of voice:

"Now it looks as if we had a man on the place."

"How is that?" asked Martha.

"Oh, now he is cleaning the stable."

It was with a feeling of profound reverence that Knut took his place at the supper-table. There were

before him only grown-up folks, and no doubt the food in such a grand house was unusually strong, so that a person should partake of it only with the greatest caution. At the head of the table sat the master himself. On the bench along the wall sat first the two hired men, Kristian Haug and Lars Hafella, then came Knut. On the opposite side of the table sat first the mistress, then the two maids, Jonetta and Karen. It was strangely quiet. It was as if no one dared to speak aloud. Knut looked up to Kristian Haug with special reverence, for he had only one eye, the other he had lost in a fight at Lofoten. He was a dark-haired, freckled rascal, and always seemed to be angry, both when he ate and when he talked. Lars Hafella, on the other hand, was a good-natured, light-haired fox, who drew his mouth up under his nose and always grinned and made fun of the whole world.

The servants slept in the large attic above the living-room. When night came, Knut found a little bed in the attic just inside the door. There was a white pillow-case, and the fur coverlet had a red lining. Everything was clean and inviting. The bed for the hired men was on one side of the room, and the bed for the maids on the other side. When Knut had gone to bed and closed his eyes, all the events of the day stood before him—grandmother, Dyrendal, the stable, all the folks at the farm—And to-morrow, perhaps, he would drive a horse—Oh!

"Knut," said Kristian Haug, "I wish you would find out what that racket is about over in the girls' bed."

"You mind your own business," said Jonetta, and pulled the covers over her head.

It became quiet. The ticking of the clock down

stairs could be heard. The spring-night darkness fell, and everything in the attic became indistinct. It was the first night Knut had slept in the same room with a grown-up woman. He listened to the breathing of the girls and the creaking of the bed as they moved. His head was also full of the book about happy marriage, which gave examples from universal history. There was David and Abigail. There was Luther and Katerina. There was Rev. Rust of Helgeland, who continued to remain a happy married man although his wife had given birth to nineteen children.

When Knut became a man himself some day—the minister from Helgeland—Napoleon at Jena——Knut slept.

The sun streamed in through the window the next day, and the others had long since gone to work; but Knut slept. He dreamed of his mother. It was not true that she was dead. She came in, having taken off her shoes in order not to wake him up. She stood beside the bed and looked at him, her face beaming with goodness. Knut thought several times he had opened his eyes.

When at last he did open his eyes, it was because the latch of the attic door fell with a light click. Immediately he became wide awake; but there was no one in the room.

"Now, then, you may eat your breakfast," said Martha, when he came downstairs. "We did not wish to wake you the first day."

Outside, load after load of manure was being hauled out into the fields on the hill-side. Knut began his first work-day at Dyrendal. He was given the white fjord pony to drive. It was small, but quick. The master helped to load the wagons, and out in the field

Kristian Haug spread the manure. He also helped Knut tip up the wagon-box and dump the load. At last Knut had a horse to manage, and himself held the lines. It was not exactly like the cavalry charge at Austerlitz, but when he held the lines tight, Whitey would curve her neck and look quite stately. Hey!

It was a warm spring day. The leaves were budding. Kristian Haug looked angrily at these loads which kept coming faster and faster. He took off his hat and vest, unbuttoned his shirt at the throat, and scattered the manure about as if it had been caught in a whirlwind. The sun rose and vexed him more and more. At last he tore off his shirt also and hung it upon the limb of a birch-tree. He stood there, naked from the waist up, and raged, swinging the heavy iron pitchfork wildly. If anyone tried to poke fun at him he threatened to poke him in the face with the pitchfork.

"I wish Jonetta could see you now," said Lars Hafella, as he whisked by with a load.

"Shut your damned mouth," snapped the other, and worked on.

Martha stood at the window watching Knut, who had to spread his feet far apart in order to stand upright in the empty wagon each time he returned from the field.

This morning, while he was still sleeping, she had gone up and stood a few minutes beside his bed. For the first time in her life a little boy had come under her care. She had looked at the light hair and the closed eyelids. She had felt a strong desire to bow down so that she might feel his breath against her cheek.

Cottagers have sons and daughters, but others who can better afford it, perhaps, are not good enough.

During the following days Hans seemed to think of nothing but this boy. He called him the King and the foreman. He made the others smile, but, the next moment, he would take the boy's part and say he would permit no one to annoy Knut. If one of the hired men would ask which horse he should use that day, Hans would turn to Knut and ask, "What do you think about it?" If he had any special errands he would always take the boy along with him. Martha felt all this as a reproach at her: "Such a boy you should have brought us; but you are not woman enough for that."

The daily prattle of the boy in the house reminded them that, however much they might toil and save, there was one thing—the most important of all—they would never in the world be able to have.

About this time Hans backslid, and one day came home drunk. It came over him like a fit. All of this prosperity, this security against the morrow, this respect in which he was held—he could hold on no longer. He saw the herring-net, full of wealth, swept out to sea, and he stood again as a pauper and swung his hat in the air. The whole thing was inexplicable. He sat in the gig on the way home from the steamship wharf, swung a bottle in the air, and sang. The folks came out and stared at him. His reputation went gloriously to sea. Knut, frightened out of his wits, sat at his side and held the lines. As they came up the avenue, the master jumped down from the gig. He waded through the grass over the hills in a wide circle.

Martha stood at the window, and saw the boy was alone in the gig. Immediately she understood the reason. She had a strong desire to roll down the curtains, close the doors, and drive everyone

away When evening came, Hans had not yet appeared.

It was late at night when Hans came in Martha was up She sat at the window sewing, but she did not raise her head.

"Ha, ha—are you sitting there, Martha?" He stumbled over the threshold "Well, I am glad of that, for here is one who has an appetite Bring out something to eat" He sat down heavily upon a bench, grinned, and looked at her with his red eyes

The servants who slept in the attic directly above the living-room heard that Hans talked and that Martha said nothing They heard that he lost his temper because she refused to answer, and raised his voice, and finally became outright insulting He seemed to want everyone to hear

"You think you are someone—you—and you imagine you are just as good as a minister or an overseer! But you are not woman enough to have a child so we can have someone to comfort us when we are old and worn out—eh! The right thing would be to drive you away from here and get me another wife. Well—you take care!—take care!"

Nothing further happened They knew that the mistress sat there, but not a sound came from her. They heard Hans stumble across the floor, and throw himself upon the bed

The following day the servants saw another side of Martha's nature She went in and out, and attended to her household duties, but she was pale, and did not say a word The maids asked her what there was to be done She neither saw nor heard them. They took hold of the work as well as they could, but dared not speak to one another except in whispers.

About the middle<sup>n</sup> of the forenoon the master appeared. He went through the living-room and into the milk-house, where he drank a large quantity of sour milk. Then he called Knut.

"It will be well to have the foreman along when we repair the fence," he said, and fetched an axe. Knut did likewise, and followed in the heels of Hans over the hills and toward the woods. He stared at the back of his master's trousers. They were pulled up a trifle too high, and made grimaces like a funny face. The big man had let his beard grow until now he looked like an ancient viking. They had soon reached the hills, covered with young, light-green trees. From there they followed the fence. Hans knew where it needed mending. They cut down alder-trees and birch-trees for rails. The withes with which the fence-rails were tied together were in bud, and when they were twisted the sap began to flow.

"The fence is decorated almost as if for a wedding," said Knut, looking upon it in a meditative mood.

"Do you think so?" said Hans, and smiled.

Being in the forest, in the dense, budding forest, made Knut giddy. The ground was covered with white anemones. The blueberry bushes were in bloom. There were many rowan-trees from which one could make canes and carve figures in the bark. The bird-cherry-trees were in blossom, and the forest was full of fragrance. A hawk soared aloft under the blue sky and looked down. All sorts of birds must have had their nests near by; for they flew and chirped and sang in every direction. Hans chewed tobacco. Knut chewed alder-bark, and spit out the juice, which was almost the colour of tobacco. They chatted, and were good friends. It was so easy to work together.

To-day Knut was the only person Hans could bear



to talk to, for in his heart he was so thoroughly ashamed of himself that he did not know what to do. Yesterday he had wrecked himself so completely that he saw no way of setting things right again. It was one thing to see a herring-net swept out to sea; but Dyrendal was different, and yesterday he had, in a way, put the whole beautiful farm at stake. He felt that he was no longer the right person to be master there. Dyrendal looked at him and *shamed him*. He felt as if he must ask humbly to be forgiven, and beg leave to enter the house again. Hans, Hans—why did you do it?

The boy chattered. He seemed to understand how his master felt, and tried to comfort him by telling tales which would put his mind at ease. Hans felt an impulse to take the boy by the hand and ask if there was a better boy in all the wide world. Knut told about the battle at Svolder—about a bold man who loved to be in the thick of the fight where spears whizzed by and battle-axes flashed. Ah, this was great! Hans forgot the work. He stood and listened. To be sure, at that time a man could break loose. There Hans would have loved to be. But this desire for the wild and foolish he would have to take by the throat and put down.

Then the boy told about Moses, who was somewhat of a rogue himself, and humbugged all the kings in Egypt. Oh, well, if Moses wasn't better, folks could not expect much from a plain, ordinary man like Hans of Lia. It was a good thing to have a boy who knew so much. And perhaps the day might come when Hans himself would require to know about one thing and another.

When the dinner-bell sounded, Hans brought out some lunch which he had earned in his coat pocket.

They sat down in a bed of blue anemones and ate. Then they went to a brook, and, resting on hands and knees, drank of the fresh, running water. When Hans lay down for his after-dinner nap, with his coat under his head and his hat over his eyes, Knut sat down near by as if to watch so that nothing would disturb his master. Oh, if that boy had been his own !

At Dyrendal potatoes were being planted in the level fields just beyond the garden. A cold, heavy rain fell, which drenched the workers and made them shiver. They talked and laughed and played many a merry prank, sometimes stopping to wipe the rain out of their faces with their muddy hands, only to make matters worse by leaving black streaks. The brown horses seemed to be more lively than ever. They steamed from the moisture, and rushed along with the plough at such a pace that Hans was compelled to run in order to keep up with them. Knut and one of the maids walked backwards in the furrow carrying a basket and setting out potatoes. The hired men covered up the potatoes in the furrow and, from time to time, threw a handful of earth at one of the girls, or dodged, unsuccessfully, a potato from the sure hand of Knut. From its nest on the hill-side a curlew rose into the air shrieking "Hunt! hunt! hunt!"

The storm in the house had subsided. Martha had begun to speak again, and everyone breathed more freely. Existence became more tolerable.

Hans trotted behind the plough, and now and then made some witty remark. "Take care there, Knut, for if I run you down, you will never in the world be a king." At the same time he was carrying about in his head a very difficult problem which he was trying his best to solve. It was about folks's respect. Of course, the devil did it, but recently he had risen so

high that folks took off their hats to him, almost as if he were the colonel himself. Then one sidestep, and straight down into the mud he went. There he lay now. Then there was the question whether there was any way of getting up again. And, furthermore, what it would cost. The respect of other people—that is something you have not cared much about, Hans, but now, it seems, you cannot live without it. Martha insists upon it. And Dyrendal demands it, in a way of its own. There is something strange about that farm. It has a power over you, like a minister, and it preaches and warns you, and says this you shall do and that you shall not do. If you go up the tree-lined roadway leading to the house it seems almost like going into a church. You feel that you ought to put on your Sunday clothes, and not only outwardly. It seemed as if the mind also should have its pressed homespun. You may have all your debts paid some day, and a shilling in the bank; but that is not enough. You must be at peace with yourself. And Dyrendal must be satisfied. That is it—and that is the difficult thing about the whole matter—that is the price you must pay. If you want to climb up again to a place of respect it costs something. It costs more than it did before. Then there is the question: Do you want to pay the price?—“Come, come—gee-up there, ponies!”

Martha says you must sign the pledge, and go to prayer meeting, and take part in politics. That is a great deal all at once. You cannot get back any cheaper, says Martha. Folks must see you are in earnest, she says. In short, you must make harbour. Can you do it? Do you want to do it?

You must give up horse-trading. It is not becoming for an honourable man. All the little tricks and

deceits—no more! To sort of toss your fellow-man up in a blanket—to talk him into believing that a worn-out old nag is a prince of England—never again! A thing of the past! It has been like a wedding, and a hup and a ho in the whole body. Now the wedding is over. And if you should happen to feel the need of a little fire in the blood, or should feel like lighting St Hans's midsummer bonfires over the whole world, you must not take even half a glass—— “Get up there, pomes, what's the matter with you!” He swung around, put the plough in the ground, and drove on.

Then there is politics! You must go to all the meetings of the liberals, I suppose, and rant about fatherland and freedom and progress. Oh, pshaw! No, then there is more sense in the conservatives, who want to protect the King and society and the Word of God. You must join the conservative party. Then the prayer meetings—huh! Hans stopped the plough with a jerk in order to catch his breath and collect his thoughts.

The earth lay under a thick mist. It was a gloomy book to read in just then. Hans saw himself driving about the country with an evangelist. And then, no doubt, he would have to sit and sing hymns and look penitent. And that quack, Jorgen Langmo, who travels about the country pricking cattle under the tail with the point of a knife, no matter what ails them, him he must call brother in the Lord. Hans, will you put up with all that? Does Dyrendal require that?

“Helloa, there is the sun!” shouted Knut, and hit Lars Hafella, who was shaking his half-frozen fingers, in the back with a potato.

The rain had become a light drizzle, and above the

mountains in the south the grey clouds were shot through with sunshine. Over the lake thick clouds surged in billows, then seemed to rise and break up. Suddenly the cuckoo began to sing. The air became warmer. The horses shook themselves, and started off again. It became more lively in the field.

Soon the roofs of all the buildings began to shine. A starling rushed back and forth over the level courtyard, gathering straw. A wagtail, with tail feathers erect, allowed itself to be carried by the wind as far as the smithy, but came back immediately, because the door of the stabur opened and Martha stepped out, carrying, on the flat of her hand, several slices of bread. She turned the rusty key in the lock, and remained standing for a moment on the step. The fjord, the mountains, the hills, the fields, appeared in a different light from what they had when she went in. This mixture of sunshine and rain seemed to fill the air with life-giving energy, so that she had actually to stop for a moment and breathe it in. The figure with the ruddy face and dark hair was still erect and youthful, but had become more filled out, and the grey dress, with black apron trimmed in red, gave her a dignity which was quite becoming to the mistress of Dyrendal.

As she walked across the courtyard she began to hum a tune to the friendly landscape. When she reached the kitchen steps she felt that the small birds followed her, so she broke off a bit of bread, crushed it in her hand, and scattered the crumbs.

Then Martha set out food on the long brown table in the living-room. She thought of those to be fed that day. She carved a generous piece of pork, and

placed it upon a slice of bread for each person. It was not merely a matter of treating all alike. A little motherly attention was also necessary; for all did not need exactly the same.

The sun poured in in such a friendly manner, and showed how freshly painted and clean everything was. There were rag carpets on the floor, flowers in the windows, and ivy that twined itself back and forth under the ceiling. It was so cosy now. And, as she went about humming to herself, it seemed again as if there were some strange little visitors present. No one except herself even suspected it. They were her children. Often they seemed so fearfully alive that she must put her hand over her eyes in order to collect herself. There was a boy and a girl. The boy was about the age of Knut. They followed her about, and chattered, and called her mother; but, of course, it would not do to set places for them at the table, because they were not yet born. They existed only in her mind.

After Knut had come, and Hans had said those frightful words the last time he was drunk, she could think of nothing else all day long. Once she went to church and sang hymns and prayed and begged that she might become a mother. That would be her comfort and reward for all she had sacrificed. Now she prayed no more. The Lord had punished her with this curse, and she was fully persuaded He did her a grievous wrong.

Whenever she was in the company of other women who had children, it gave her pain—such dreadful pain. To see these little ones crawl upon their mothers' laps and throw their arms about their necks, and chatter and smile—oh, she could hate them all! It was as if the other women's happiness had been

stolen from her. She knew that she also would have been a good mother. She knew that much that was now frozen in her heart would have been thawed out and made soft. But she was not permitted. She was not permitted to be good. It seemed almost as if the powers above had tried to assault her, and she had a desire to defend herself—to strike, to defy, to become angry, so that others might see what she must suffer.

A woman who has no children is like the Day of Judgment, says the Bible. They would, therefore, do well to beware of her. No one knew what terrible struggles took place in her heart, and there was no one in whom she could confide. There was nothing for her to do but keep her lips tightly closed, and go about her household duties as if nothing were wrong.

Shortly afterward she walked slowly over the courtyard toward the stabur, over which, in its tower, the dinner-bell hung. She grasped the bell-rope, and called the work-people home. It rang and rang—ding, dong, ding, dong, out into the fresh sunny day. And the cuckoo, the rogue, seemed to answer from the hill-side.

When the work-people came from the field, their feet muddy, they went the kitchen way and left their shoes outside on the steps.

It was on the afternoon of this day that something happened which placed Hans in a terrible state of excitement.

He stood for a moment behind the plough to let the horses rest, and, as usual, he looked around to see if there was anything of note to read in the great book of nature open before him. Someone in a cart drove up toward the church. A dog ran ahead. It



was, therefore, the doctor. A little nearer on the road, skirting the hills, came two wayfarers afoot, carrying their coats. They were, no doubt, travellers from afar. They had some important errand. Hans became interested. What if they were horse-dealers!

However, Hans collected himself. Remember, now, what you have promised and sworn to-day. All that belongs to the past. There will be no wedding this time, if you are a man who can live up to his promises.

The two strangers came nearer and nearer. Hans began to feel sick. He was not able to plough any longer, so he asked Lars Hafella to take his place.

He left his boots on the steps outside and hastened in.

"You will have to let me lie down on the bed awhile," he said to Martha, "because I feel sick."

"Yes, you just try to lie down with those dirty clothes on," she said. Hans slipped his suspenders over his shoulders, and kicked off his trousers in a hurry. The next moment he lay on the bed, and had the pillow pulled over his head.

Martha looked out of the window. Aha, it was as she had thought. There were two strangers in the field, and now they started toward the house. It was not the first time Hans had become so agitated that it was necessary for him to go to bed.

The master of Dyrendal had a strong desire to fold his hands and pray for help to resist the temptation; for the truth was he had a dark-coloured horse with bad feet which he would like very much to get rid of. Lately he had kept the horse in the stable, so that it was fat and lively. No one would suspect

there was anything the matter with its feet. Of course, to sell the horse would be deceit, ha, ha, ha—well! But deceit and all kinds of cheating were a thing of the past as sure as the good Lord would extend him so much as a finger.

Steps were heard outside. The door opened. Two men of sedate mien stepped in, took off their hats, and said good day.

"Won't you sit down," said Martha, who sat at the fireside with her knitting.

The strangers looked about for chairs, and said perhaps they would sit down.

They sat down cautiously as near the door as possible, placed their hats on their knees, and looked straight into space.

"Do you come far?" Martha asked.

"Oh, I wouldn't say we've come very far," said one of the men—a tall, bald-headed, red-bearded fellow. "We are from down Vassby way," he continued.

"From out on the headlands," informed the other—a blond fellow with genial, white eyebrows. Then there was a pause.

"This is fine weather for planting," suggested Martha, stealing a glance at Hans, who lay on the bed with his back turned, moaning feebly.

"Yes, very fine weather," admitted the bald-headed one, clearing his throat and stroking his head, "especially for one who has everything he needs to work with."

Martha looked at him questioningly, and agreed that, when a person has everything he needs to work with, he is not badly off.

"You see, we lost our horse the other day," said the blond man, looking toward the bed, "and my

brother here came with me to see if there was any horse to be had. It is quite an expense, but I suppose the time is past when it would do for a man to hitch his wife to the plough—ha, ha, ha ! ”

Martha smiled, and agreed that perhaps it would not do for a man to plough with his wife in our day.

Hans turned suddenly in the bed, but pulled the pillow over his head again.

Then the blond man went straight to the matter which had brought him.

“ We had sort of thought of asking the master of Dyrendal if he had a horse he could help us out with, but he seems to be sick ? ”

Martha raised her eyebrows. She sighed, and said, oh, yes, Hans was very sick to-day.

“ Perhaps it is quite serious ? ” said the blond man, his face clouded with an anxious look.

Well, she was afraid he had overstrained himself while ploughing, and perhaps ruptured himself internally. If he did not become better before evening she thought they would have to send for the doctor.

“ Then there is no use talking about buying a horse at this house,” sighed the bald-headed one, and made a move as if to rise.

Martha, looking very serious, rose, and walked over to the bed.

“ Are you well enough to talk to these men ? ” she asked.

Hans looked up from under the pillow in a dazed sort of fashion.

“ Are there visitors here ? ” he asked in a weak and plaintive tone of voice.

“ Yes, but I suppose you are so sick that we shouldn't trouble you ? ”

Hans moaned, shook his head, and pulled the pillow over his head again.

The two strangers looked at one another, rose, and were about to go.

"Then it is not worth while to stay any longer," said the blond man, reaching for the door-latch.

When Hans heard this, he raised his head, and asked if Martha did not have a cup of coffee for the travellers.

Yes, of course. Martha started for the kitchen door, and said they needn't be in such a great hurry. She hoped they would be able to wait until she had cooked coffee.

The strangers looked at one another again. The air seemed to become filled with hope. Then they said they didn't want anybody to go to any trouble on their account, and sat down on their chairs again.

Hans seemed to be gaining in strength. He fumbled for his pipe, which lay on a chair beside the bed, and glanced at the strangers while he struck a match.

"Perhaps it is a big horse you are looking for," he said, in a whimpering tone of voice.

"Oh, no, only an ordinary farm horse. The farm is not very large," the blond man hastened to say.

The pipe seemed to revive the sick one. He stretched himself out on the bed, and began to ask how they intended to vote at the election in the autumn. The strangers exchanged glances. Was his illness not worse than that?

Martha came in, spread a table-cloth, and began setting the table. Hans took more and more interest in the conversation about politics and elections. All

the time he kept an eye on the two strangers. He wondered how sharp they were.

"Are you able to get up and drink a cup of coffee?" Martha asked, when she was ready to serve.

How could she think that? Hans shook his head, and began to feel wretchedly ill again. But if she would bring him half a cup, he might be able to drink it.

The strangers went to the table timidly. When they had finished and had thanked Martha and Hans for the coffee and other refreshments, Hans said he might try to get up long enough to take them to the stable and let them see his horses.

"Take care, now, Hans, so that you don't do what you will regret later," said Martha, with a smile. Hans looked at her as if he would ask her to help him resist temptation, but it was too late. The next moment he stood on the floor and put on his trousers.

Martha stood at the window, and followed them with her eyes until they disappeared in the stable door.

She could not smile, for at one time she had actually imagined she would never give up before Hans. Lia was just as fine a man as the forester at Myr.

A moment later the horse appeared. Hans stumbled on the threshold, and the horse got away from him—an old trick. The horse, being rested, raised his head, and set out at a gallop around the yard. It made a fine appearance, and, no doubt, Hans stood there and swore that he would not part with that horse for anything in the world.

Nevertheless, it was not long before the blond stranger brought out his pocket-book. And it was not until Hans had the money in his breast pocket that he succeeded in catching the horse.

"Pshaw!" he said a bit shamefacedly, when he came in and the strangers were gone, "The horse is more than good enough for that rascal. And now I suppose that is about the last horse-deal for me," he added, in a tone of voice as if he felt old and worn out.

THEN came the bright summer morning when the cows were to be let out of their stalls and taken to the pasture and summer stable in the uplands.

There was unrest in the long, dimly-lighted cow-stable. The maids shouted as they loosed the halters. There was impatient bellowing and clanking of chains. Out in the barn-yard stood Knut, who had armed himself with a large new whip, which he swung mightily and made to crack. To-day he felt himself the person of chief importance. Now folks would find out what he really was.

"What do you intend to use that for?" asked the mistress as she went by.

Oh, with that he would tame cows so that they would obey at the mere sound of it. And that was exactly the way it was done at artillery drills.

"But the cows are not going to be drilled. You go and put the whip where you found it."

Knut's high spirits fell, but the mistress was not one who could be defied. He did as he was told, and equipped himself with a long willow branch instead.

The red bell-cow showed herself in the doorway and stopped for a moment, blinded by the bright light. Then she came out, followed by white, black, and brown cows, which, lowing and hastening by one

another, spread over the barn-yard. They danced and tumbled about in their wild joy over freedom and summer. Then came the march through the fields to the uplands. Martha led the bell-cow first. Knut galloped around with a large blue patch on the back of his pants, swinging his whip with a hip and a ho to keep the other cows together. There were heavy, large-bellied milk-cows, and slender heifers with eyelashes so fine and fair that they might well be called maidens. There were red hornless cows with white heads, and cows with horns whose bright brass tips glittered in the sunshine. The animals were maddened by the bright light, the limitless space, and the odour of forest and meadow. Old stiff cows kicked up their hind legs so that their joints cracked, raised their horns and bellowed, and imagined they were young. Only the brown, podgy old ox walked soberly, and was cross because he was the last to be let out.

Old red Rosa, with her big and heavy udder, found it hard to follow the others, because her hoofs had grown so long that they were bent up like broken nails, and every step was painful. She took very short steps, and, even then, winced at every step. No one seemed to have sense enough to cut off those long nails.

"Get along there!" shouted Knut, as he swung his whip. Rosa strained until the white of her eyes showed, and tried to run, but she was compelled to give it up. She could better stand the lashes of the whip.

At the gate of the summer pasture stood Martha, counting the cows as they went through. There were thirty in all, but there should be one more.

"Where is Rosa?" she asked of the boy.



"Oh, that old pig won't go," he said, panting. "But you just wait—I'll show her!" And away he ran swinging his whip.

Martha looked at the old cow, which was being driven mercilessly by Knut.

"I think we'll keep you at home in the stable this summer," she said, in a motherly tone of voice. She patted her on the neck, took her by the horn, and led her back again. "Come with me, bossy!"

Rosa had been with them since the days on the little farm up among the mountains, when Martha did the milking herself. Many a time it had been a comfort to her to place her forehead against the warm side of the peaceful animal, and she had not forgotten it.

The cows stood for a moment behind the fence, looking up toward the hills and snorting. Memories of the life up there last year were in the air. They scented the long summer of freedom, the juicy grass, and the cool, clear brooks from which they might drink.

Then off they went. They pawed the moss and heather and white anemones. They wanted to be everywhere at once. White backs vanished under leaves. Brass-tipped horns flashed through the bushes. Bells, bellowings, and the sound of breaking branches filled the air of the bright, warm day. The boy could follow without much trouble, but the blueberries were nearly ripe—his mouth was already stained. See, there is an adder! Ah, he's slipped under a stone. The lower hill-slopes are covered with bluish-grey alders, with here and there towering, green spruce-trees, and, arching over the whole, a clear blue sky without a single cloud.

Later Knut ascends Lookout Hill. He stands

there and looks upon the billowing world of mountain and forest and lake and field. Beyond the blue pasture, far to the north, there is something still more blue, which blends with and disappears in the sky. It is the ocean. This is the first time Knut has been able to see so far. He remains standing, lost in thought, gazing.

So the day passes. The cows have become more quiet and peaceful. Knut sits upon a stone, eating his lunch, and drinking water from a brook. He is his own master. When he becomes tired of turning somersaults in the heather, he sits down and cuts birch twigs for a broom. It is even more pleasant to lie on the back in the soft moss and listen to the murmur of the wind through the trees and look up into the sky. There is an odour of warm juniper, sap, and rotten bark. The gnats, no doubt, believe the sky is a shining ocean, and every leaf a green ship upon which they may embark and set sail.

Then he thinks for a moment about grandmother, and the future, when the world will call him Knut, the mighty one. Then his eyes close.

The warm sunshine on his face, and the cow-bells, and the brook, and the murmur among the trees—all the many sounds of the day mingle and take the form of a song. It fills and sways his entire body. He places his hands under his head, raises one knee, and begins to hum also, but what the tune is he does not know.

At last he must gather the cows again. He finds himself in a bog between two hills. Then it occurs to him that the cows are in reality the Israelites. Now they go about looking innocent, but they have made up their minds to march out of Egypt to-night.

The bell-cow is Moses and the ox is Aaron with the long staff

Toward evening, when the cows are eating their way homewards, Knut again climbs Lookout Hill. This time he gazes upon the western sky, which is a world of many-coloured clouds. In the north many curious figures come riding out of the sea. He understands at least so much that one of them is King David and another is Abigail, both clad in garments of black and gold.

A few days later Martha said to Hans: "It is strange how little milk the cows are giving this year. It must be that the grass in the pasture is poor this summer."

The following day Hans came in and walked back and forth across the floor while filling his pipe.

"It is not strange that the cows do not give much milk," he said. "I made a trip up to the pasture and found out what a matchless herd-boy we have."

"No, did you?" she said, raising her eyes from her knitting.

"He drove and drilled the cows like a general. He rode on the back of the ox."

"Oh, that's what's the matter!" said Martha.

When Knut had come home and sat alone eating his supper, the mistress said to him in a very innocent tone of voice:

"I suppose everything is all right with the cows and the pasture, Knut?"

"Yes, of course! It is great fun to be in the woods," he said, and crammed his mouth full.

"And the cows, I hope, get all the grass they can eat?" she continued.

Hans struck a match in order to light his pipe, but forgot about it and looked sideways at Knut.

"Yes, they eat like mad," said Knut. "They don't look up from one end of the day to the other. And so much grass as there is this year! They are almost ready to burst when evening comes."

"And you enjoy riding on the ox?" said Martha innocently.

The boy stopped chewing and became red in the face. He seemed to want to sink through the floor.

Hans said with a curious laugh: "So you are a cavalryman?" and struck another match.

"I—I only wanted to show another boy, the sacristan's boy, how—how the battle of Austerlitz was fought."

He looked first at one, then at the other. They also looked at one another. Martha sniffled. Hans rose, and walked over to Knut, who felt an iron grip on his neck.

"I advise you to let the cows eat in peace," said Hans, and shook the boy until he began to cry.

. . . . .

One Sunday afternoon in the middle of June there was a large temperance meeting at the sacristan's house which was situated at the north end of the lake. Flags were waving over the house-tops. The courtyard was full of people. A travelling temperance speaker, with a long cape and blue spectacles, stood before a reading-stand, which was decorated with leaves, and spoke thundering words. Coffee and lemonade were served at long tables along one side.

Children were running in and out among the houses shouting and laughing. Young men and young women were walking about in groups teasing one another.

"See, there is a team from Dyrendal," was heard among the people, and all turned to see who the newcomers were. It was almost as if the colonel himself came driving.

It was Martha and Hans. The fat, brown horse trotted along calmly before the gig, and the two who sat in the gig pretended they did not see anyone until two men came up and offered to help unhitch.

Martha gathered her dark shawl about her. She walked slowly through the crowd and allowed those to shake hands with her who desired to do so. When Hans returned in his pressed homespun suit and brown plush hat and thin-soled shoes, he had a creepy feeling along the spine, because a couple of small boys had raised their hats to him. Was not he from Dyrendal, and almost as good as the colonel himself? There were also sly smiles and sidelong looks. What did that drunkard and scoundrel want at a temperance meeting?

After the speaking, the sacristan's wife invited Martha and Hans into the front room, together with the speaker and the minister.

"Oh, I believe we have here the new political leader," said the minister, trying to be genial.

"Well," smiled Hans, "you may call me that if you like."

Late at night gigs and carts drove in all directions from the meeting. Martha and Hans let their horse jog along at its own pace on the road beside the lake, enjoying the warm summer night.

Thus the step was taken. Hans Dyrendal had signed the pledge and joined the temperance society. Both sat silent and felt that a turn in the road had been passed. Something new had begun.

Martha took a deep breath. A peace had come over her which she had not felt since her marriage. And—yet it was not enough. Something was still lacking.

When he had arrived home and unhitched the horse, he did not go in, although it was nearly midnight. It was light as day. The clouds in the western sky were aglow after the sunset. He felt a desire to wander about. He stopped here and there to look at the landscape. All was changed. The open book before him spoke a different language. Hereafter he would not be looking for the same things on the roads as formerly. Hans Lia would make the harbour and would become Hans I of Dyrendal.

Farewell, youth! Farewell, merry journeys to the market in the village! Farewell, all you horse-dealers from Jemtland that I have led by the nose so many a blessed time. Farewell, you glass filled with joy! Many a time you have kicked my legs from under me in the street, and landed me in jail, but you were a good comrade for all that. You made many a stiff-necked trader easy to manage, and when I was heavy-hearted you brought wedding and ball and dance. Farewell, horse trading—farewell, easily earned money! Now I shall have to save my shillings. At an end, all merriment and joy! Farewell!

When the new day began to glow in the eastern sky Hans still wandered about. He felt an impulse of mad defiance surge up within him. He had a desire to get drunk and allow the whole thing to be

swept to sea again—hurrah! But perhaps it would be best to take that desire by the throat. At last he found himself standing on the headland near the fishing-net. Here there was no one to see him. During the three or four hours of the night the fishermen were at home, sound asleep.

It was here that Hans permitted himself a bit of nonsense as a last farewell. He rowed out, opened the fishing-net, tied the boat to the ladder, climbed to the top of the ladder, and began to stare into the lake at the white bottom. What was the good of it? If any salmon should come there was no one to haul the net ashore. Nevertheless, he stood there and stared as if the whole thing were in earnest. He waited patiently hour after hour. There were flashes of gold in the billows down there. The sun rose, but Hans remained standing motionless. He began to fear that those who tended the net might come and think he was mad. What of it? Here he stood, and here he would remain standing.

Ah, what was that! Shadows—there are more! The grey streaks of lightning in the water cannot be mistaken. Heaps of silver coins dance before his eyes.

He opens his mouth and lets out a wild "Haul in!"

The echo sounded in the yellow morning, but the rope did not move, and of course he knew it would not. Heaps of silver coins were swept out to sea—hurrah!

He crept down from the ladder, stepped into the boat, and rowed ashore. Ah—thus loss at last after such success—as a farewell—even if it was only nonsense, it warmed him and tasted like a drink of strong brandy.

"Where in the world have you been?" asked Martha. She was awake, although it was only three o'clock, with the early sun streaming in through the window.

"Oh, I have been wandering about over field and meadow," he said, and began to undress.

"It seemed exactly as if I heard someone shout 'Haul in,' " she yawned.

"How could that be possible—now at night? If anyone shouted I should have heard it."

They lay there side by side. The clock ticked. Neither of them could sleep.

"It must be the strong coffee that keeps one awake," she said.

"Oh, it must be that you have something on your mind," he said, and turned toward the wall.

After a time she said: "Perhaps it is so. Have you thought what we are to do—when we are old and no longer are able to take care of ourselves?"

"Well—it won't be worse for us than for other people," he mumbled.

"Other people have children. They have their own to go to for refuge. But we—we must put ourselves in the power of total strangers. It doesn't help how much we save." She sighed and closed her eyes, as if better to see the situation clearly.

"Well, that cannot be helped," he said, and turned his face toward her.

Both were silent for a time, then at last she said: "What if we should adopt a child?"

"Hem!" He gave a sudden start. Then both were silent. It was as if something had escaped her lips, which both long had thought of but had hesitated to mention.



The summer was passing rapidly. The St. Hans fair was approaching, but this year Hans had decided to remain at home. It irritated him to see others prepare to go. He would perhaps read in a hymn-book that day, or take Knut along and wander through the woods to pass away the time.

Knut—yes, that boy reminded them each day of the very thing they had been talking about lately. When he chattered, when he sat at the table and ate, when Martha patched his little pants, when Hans took him along on his wanderings, it was the same constantly—he reminded them of what they themselves lacked, and their sense of want became worse and worse.

Hans came home one day and asked Martha to come into the front room. He took a yellow bank-book from his pocket, and said :

“Now the worst is over, Martha mine.”

“What is that ?”

“Dyrendal is paid for. This Hans Longway has bought the place. The last debt is paid. And still we have this much cash left.” The book showed there was five hundred dollars in the bank.

“Indeed !” she said, and looked out of the window.

“Indeed ?” he repeated, as if hurt. “You mean this is nothing to speak of ?”

“Oh no, not that,” she said, and went out.

He understood what she meant. What she did mean was

“We save and put away, and soon we shall be rich, but who is it we are saving for—we two ?”

They walked out into the fields together one Sunday evening, and saw that the crops were doing well.

Hans talked of breaking up twenty acres of new land north of the orchard, but the next moment he stroked his large beard and added, almost as if ashamed of himself :

“ For that matter, I suppose we have enough as it is—we two.”

Now at last they could afford to pause long enough to see what a beautiful place Dyrendal really was. And was it not more than that ? Not only had it brought them prosperity and social position, but it was a power in itself which had forced Hans to become a decent and respectable man. Lately, when he walked upon the stately avenue leading to the house, or in the garden, he would have a sort of Sunday feeling which reminded him of the organ in church. When he came driving home on a dark night and saw lights from all the windows he had a desire in his heart to thank the house, which had such a magnificent appearance, for bidding him welcome. But he could not live for ever. Who should have Dyrendal after him ?

When, at night, they had gone to bed and closed their eyes, pictures appeared of the tasks of the day, that which must be done on the morrow, the life on the farm—all that was valuable, and all they were responsible for. It was their life—it was the greater part of themselves. Horses were tethered out on the hill-sides, a new sort of barley had been sown on a plot in front of the house : this was a part of Dyrendal—it was a part of the master himself. In the daytime cattle grazed on the uplands ; one cow was kept in the barn and was about to have a calf ; the best of butter came from the milk-house : it was a part of Dyrendal—it was a part of Martha herself. And when they went driving and folks raised their hats

near relative at the bedside to hold them by the hand. And then he would continue their life at Dyrendal, and would continue to call them father and mother.

Hans smoked and smoked. It was the first time he had ever hesitated to stake a big sum on a single card.

Of course, if the thing was to be done there was no sense in postponing it.

At last Martha cleared her throat, and said in the darkness:

"Well—if you think we ought to go to-morrow, why——"

Hans started and looked towards her. He heard that she breathed heavily, as if these words from her had now cast the die for both of them.

That night, as they lay side by side, they felt that again they had come to the parting of the ways. Hitherto there had been only they themselves. One could do the other good or harm, but at any rate they were only two. Now there would be a third who would be a part of them, and who would have to be considered in everything.

They saw the child. They did not know its name. They knew only that it was a boy. They had no idea whether he was light or dark. But he must have a good disposition. They saw themselves as old and worn-out people, who needed to have their own about them. Then he would not be a stranger who would look upon them as a burden and wish them dead. Could they depend upon that? Would he really be good to them when the time should come?

The next day they drove out dressed in their Sunday clothes. There was a certain mysterious-

ness about them. When folks met them and asked where they were going, they answered that they were going for a drive. They drove very slowly—as if they felt that they would soon enough reach their destination.

END OF PART I

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*God and Woman*

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*Part II*

MARTHA saw her native parish again. The road led by Ersland. She saw the house, once yellow, now weather-beaten and drab. No doubt her brothers felt that they could not afford to throw away money for anything so unimportant as paint. The road also passed Myr. Here she saw a little boy with golden locks playing in the garden. She turned her face away. The nearer they got to her sister's farm, the greater became her desire to turn around and go home. What sort of errand was this ?

The horse jogged along, and every moment they were getting nearer and nearer. About dusk they reached the end of their journey. The sister, a dried-up woman in the fifties, stood on the door step, shielding her eyes with her hand, trying to make out who the visitors might be. Could she believe her eyes? The windows were full of faces. What visitors were these coming to see them ?

The sisters greeted one another with a hand-shake and a thin smile. Each thought of the other : " You have changed a great deal since last we met." Hans and Martha sat near the door like strangers. The younger children stood around and stared at them with their fingers in their mouths. They did not look quite as if they had been washed and combed that day. Of course, it was not to be expected that everything should be neat and orderly in a house where so many feet ran in and out, but Martha

thought, nevertheless, "If I had as many little ones to keep the house in order for, I am sure it would look different."

It was the youngsters, however, for whom she had an eye. It was hard to keep from smiling; for Hans seemed to be occupied with keeping his pipe lit, while they were talking about the weather and the crops and the sister set the table. But it was the youngsters in whom he also was most interested. There was a grown boy, who, no doubt, would inherit the farmstead. Two red-headed girls in the confirmation age—they were too old, and, besides, it was a boy they wanted. There was a boy of ten—Nils was his name—and a girl of six. Then there was a boy of four. The youngest was two. Cinderella, of course, the mother would never part with. It would have to be, no doubt, the boy who was four years old. Hans began to make advances to him. He tried to get him to sit on his lap. He exchanged glances with Martha. They were agreed, and both had a strong desire to smile.

That evening they said nothing about their errand. It was the next morning, when the sisters were alone in the kitchen, Martha suggested that perhaps one of the children might like to go back with them to Dyrendal and remain awhile. It would be quite a treat to have such a mischief-maker in the house for a few days, she thought.

The sister gave her a side glance. "Oh, that would never do," she thought. "Of course, it would be a great favour to the child to give it such an outing; but there is always so much bother with little ones, and Martha, who was not used to such things, would soon be both tired and sorry."

"I think not," said Martha. She felt she was

becoming red. "If you have been able to take care of so many, I think I can manage one."

"Well, which one had you thought of?" asked the sister.

"Oh, I had thought, perhaps, the one who is four years old. What is his name—Paul?"

"Paul, the poor fellow, he is so little, but——" The sister hesitated. Martha had never felt so much like a beggar as at this moment.

Little Paul became quite a man when he heard that he was to be permitted to wear his new clothes and go home with his aunt.

When Hans and Martha drove away Paul sat between them. The red ribbons of his Scotch cap fluttered in the wind. His brothers and sisters looked on with mingled feelings of pride and envy. The mother called after him that now he must be a good boy, and dried her eyes.

The boy was in raptures for some time. Then he wanted them to go back so that his mother might come also. When he was refused he became very sober. He looked back. As the house was no longer in view he wanted to get down from the gig and run home. Martha coaxed him to go with them to Dyrendal first, then he might see his mother some other time. But the boy realised he was among strangers, and thought they wanted to take him away by force. He began to cry. He tried to tear himself away and jump to the ground. Martha held him fast and spoke kindly to him. Hans promised to give him a colt as soon as they got home. The boy's only thought was that they were taking him so far away that he would never see his mother again. He cried and kicked and struggled for dear life. Folks came out of the houses they passed and stared at



them. Hans whipped the horse into a run. Martha must hold the boy with both hands. Suddenly he struck her in the face with his fist. Hans swore under his breath, and immediately turned the horse around.

"No, no, there must be an end to this," he said angrily.

Soon they were at the sister's house again. Martha could not help smiling. She had been a mother to the little madcap only half an hour, and was compelled to bring him back. His real mother stood on the steps and smiled also. She reached out her hands, and the boy tumbled into her arms.

"I want to bring back what I borrowed," said Martha.

The sister urged them to come in and stay for the night. They accepted the invitation. It was time enough to go home empty-handed on the morrow.

The next day the sister said: "There is one here who is very anxious to go with you, but it is almost a shame to speak of such things now."

"Which one is it?" asked Hans.

"Oh, it is that boy, Nils."

Nils, who stood near by, blushed bashfully. He was ten years old. He was not really too old to become their son.

"Well, why not let him come along then?" said Martha.

This distrust on the part of little Paul had hurt her feelings, and it actually did her good to see that Nils showed confidence in her, and was willing and anxious to come. She patted him on the back.

"So you are not afraid of us, and are willing to

risk it? Well—it may be we shall become good friends in time, you and I?”

They drove away, with Nils standing up behind the seat.

Nils was a chubby boy with hair the colour of ashes. His face was red and full. There was a smile in one corner of his mouth. His eyes hid when anyone looked at him. Now he stood there in his new suit of homespun and cap, and held fast to the brass hand-rail, while the gig rumbled up hill and down, through the woods.

When Hans turned his head to make some pleasant remark, Nils hid his eyes and screwed the right side of his mouth into a smile, but did not say a word. It was best to be careful. He did a little thinking for himself. He wondered how long this visit would last. So much he had understood from what the grown folks had said, that there was something underneath all this. Therefore, in order to be on the safe side, he made a mental note of certain landmarks along the road so that he would be able to find his way home again.

The autumn day was cold. There was a damp wind from the ocean. The fields lay in a hazy light. A storm was brewing. All three shivered from the cold as they brought up at Dyrendal.

“Now I think you and I will get something warm into our stomachs,” said Martha, leading Nils by the hand into the house.

The boy kept his cap pulled over his eyes and sat down near the door. It was so clean and light in the house. All who came in were grown up and spoke only sensible, cold words. No one made any noise. No one ran about, shouting and laughing. It was so hard to breathe. He was told he might come

to the table, but in order to do that he must cross the wide, painted floor. He remained sitting where he was. He wished he were back home.

"My dear boy, don't you want some dinner?" said Martha, and brought him to the table.

"You must take off your cap," said Hans when the boy at last sat on the bench before the table and had taken a spoon in his hand. Nils smiled out of the right corner of his mouth, bent his head to one side, and blushed, but he let the cap remain on his head.

They ate awhile. Hans gave him sidelong glances. Jonetta giggled. Kristian Haug blurted out:

"I say, you take that cap off, boy!"

Nils took his cap off, and threw it on the floor. The grown-up folks smiled again. He began to swallow his tears. Then he looked out of the window, and tried to figure how far it would be to walk home.

Nils began to wake up when Knut came in with slate and books under his arm. Knut stopped abruptly when he saw the strange boy, and Nils stared at him.

"There is one who is so smart in school that he expects to be King some day," said Hans, and rose from the table.

The two boys met outside later in the day. Knut made up his mind that he was the older.

"Have you many books?" he asked.

"Yes, those we use in school," answered Nils.

"Pooh! Don't you know even all the Emperors of Rome?"

"No," said Nils.

Nils was not to sleep with the servants in the attic,

but was to have a bed downstairs in the bedroom, like a person of quality. When everything was quiet in the house, and Martha and Hans had gone to bed, they remained awake with a strange feeling that now, at last, a person had come into the house who was near to them. He was not a son, no, not yet; but he might become one. They would have to do their best so that he would come to like them. But Martha still felt strangely dissatisfied. Why was it? Well—it was this, that he was too large. It was the little helpless child in her arms that she had wanted all these years—the first babble, while the two clear eyes rested upon the mother and the little hand gripped her finger. And the age when the little one toddled along hanging in the mother's skirts, and lisped little foolish questions: "Mother, is the Lord in Heaven going to have pork for dinner too?" Of all this she had been cheated. Nils came into her life as a large, sly fellow, who took great care not to say anything foolish. It was as if her dammed-up desire to be a mother must make a great leap in order to reach him.

"I wonder if we ought to have the shoemaker make him a pair of tall boots?" Hans mused, as he lay in bed smoking. "Men of his sort like to wade in the water."

"I was just wondering if there is enough homespun cloth on hand, so that he can have a suit of clothes," said Martha.

"Oh, well, if there is not enough, I can wait until some other time," said Hans.

They had someone to think of whose interests came before their own. That was something new. They felt almost as if it made them better.

"I wonder if he is sleeping well?" said Martha.

"I hope he is not lying awake, wishing he were home again," yawned Hans.

Hans must get up out of bed and go to the bedroom door in order to listen. It was dark in there, but he heard the quiet breathing of one who was sleeping. This regular and peaceful breathing was almost like a blessing. Hans stood there for some time, listening

NILS opened his eyes and noticed that he was in a strange place, but beside the bed stood his aunt. She smiled, and offered him a glass of rich milk and some cakes on a tray. It tasted good, but she stroked his hair and patted him on the cheek. This he did not like, because her hand was different from his mother's hand.

In the living-room there was sunshine, and near the door sat a man with a grey beard, who took a chew of tobacco as Nils came in.

"Well, I see you have another little man in the house," said he.

Martha smiled, and the old man smiled.

"He is a relative of mine," she said. "He came home with us from my sister's house yesterday."

"Is that so?" said the greybeard. "Well, then, I suppose we might as well call him the heir."

"Oh, that does not follow necessarily," thought Martha.

"What do you think about it, Nils?" asked Hans.

The boy was not used to being talked to as if he were an important person. He wished he were far away. As soon as he had eaten his breakfast, he went outdoors.

Heir? For the first time in his life he was among strangers, and did not have his mother to go to with his troubles. He hunted for Knut so that they might find something pleasant to do together. But this thing about the heir was still in his mind, and it would

not do to talk to the herd-boy about that. He was not here merely as a visitor anyway. There was something underneath. What was an heir? He became sort of grown up because he was alone in this matter and had no one to confide in. With his cap drawn down over his eyes, in his wide homespun pants and red shirt-sleeves, the little fellow walked about, first to the stable, then to the smithy. He stopped and took the pose of a grown man because it was necessary for him to think, just like a grown person.

Heir? Was he to have everything here—houses, fields, cows, horses, woods, all? But in that case he would have to live here all the time. He could not go home and live with his mother and his brothers and sisters any more. What if it were true? It became harder and harder not to have anyone to talk to about this.

During the day he heard the same thing time and again. When Jonetta was alone with him in the wood-shed she said "So you are the crown prince, are you?" When a cottager's wife came toward the house carrying a pail, she stopped and looked at him. "Well, well—I believe that is the son at Dyrendal. Yes, yes—it is no mere trifle you will fall heir to, if you behave well." It was as if all the sunshine fell upon Nils. He had a strong desire to run away into the darkness. At last he hid behind the thrashing-machine in the barn. He was not in the habit of thinking. His brain was in a whirl. It was great to be heir, crown prince, son at Dyrendal. But just now he wanted to go home to mother. It was as if they had tricked him into coming here, and refused to let him go home again. His feelings were hurt, and at last he began to cry. But if he should go into the

house with tears in his eyes, the grown-up folks would smile at him again. Therefore he stole away to the stable, and washed his face in the watering-trough.

When Knut, the herd-boy, appeared, the two little men took measure of one another. They approached cautiously, and spoke while still some distance apart.

"Are you going to Lofoten when you are grown up?" asked Nils.

"No, I am going to be Prime Minister," answered Knut.

"You silly fool!" Nils sneered and went away.

Evil days were in store for Knut. He was pushed aside for the new arrival. It was no use saying witty things when among the grown-up folks any more. It was Nils and Nils both early and late. Nils might sleep as late as he liked in the morning. He was allowed to wear his good clothes every day. When the mistress was in the milk-house she would call him in, and when he came out again he had cream on his lips. The master no longer said: "What do you think about it, Knut?" No, it was Nils, always Nils. It hurt his feelings, but who cared about that at Dyrendal now? Knut had fallen so low that now he was only a herd-boy, and a herd-boy is not much more than a dog.

Once when he was chopping wood, Nils came up slowly:

"Is—is it fun to be a herd-boy?"

Knut waited a long time before he replied:

"No, here the cows know so much, they herd themselves."

"Know so much—cows?"

"Yes, we have an ox who can read in a book."

"You are an ox yourself."

"And you are a calf."



"You take care, or I'll go in and tell."

"You are a calf—a cream calf."

Nils swallowed and swallowed. That went home. He hurried away with stalwart steps. But he did not go in and tattle. If anyone did him ever so much wrong, there was no woman here in whose lap he had a desire to hide his face and complain. Later in the day the two boys became friends for awhile, and Knut showed Nils how to make a tobacco pipe of a thread bobbin. They took a walk in the woods, lay on their stomachs, and smoked moss together.

One day, when Martha was slicing pork in the stabur, Nils came in sniffing, and asked if he might go home to see his mother that day.

Martha gave a start, but answered cheerfully.

"My dear, you must wait until your new clothes are ready. During the holidays the tailor will come, and you must be here so that he can take your measure."

New clothes! The boy's face brightened. Yes, he would like that. And one day he walked back and forth on the floor trying them on. The pants had the new style pockets, just like the pockets men had. The next Sunday he was to wear them to church. Mother—mother was pushed aside.

Martha went about, thinking:

"So you cannot make him feel quite happy here. You do not have the knack, no matter how much you have the will. And you, who imagined he would begin soon to call you mother."

No, to be kind to a strange boy in such a way that he would like it was, after all, not such a simple matter. A boy's mind is a difficult fiddle to play upon. All her attempts proved wrong. If she petted him in the presence of others, he would be ashamed.

He was too big for that. If she spoke to him in endearing terms, he would become cross and look at the others. It was as if he called upon them to bear witness that he was no child.

One day, just for fun, she tried to take him on her lap, but he struck at her, tore himself away, and ran outdoors.

It was his own mother he longed for. Martha's sister had so many children, and yet, even at a distance, she pulled and pulled at Nils so that his new mother at Dyrendal always might feel that Nils never could become her boy.

Every evening she dreaded what the next day might bring forth. For what if he should come again and want to go home? If he should run away it would be a misfortune both for her and for Hans.

He came in again with signs of tears on his face, although it was clear that he had tried to wash them away. He wanted to go home to mother right away, he sobbed. And as he stood there he began to cry.

Once more she coaxed him to stay. This time it was the shoemaker who was coming to make him a pair of tall boots. His chubby face brightened again, and he smiled out of the right corner of his mouth. He would wait until the shoemaker had been there. He did want so much to have a pair of tall boots.

Martha sighed when she was alone. She had stooped so low as to buy the boy, time and again, when he had no desire to remain on her account. Would it always be the same?

One dark winter day, when the snow-drifts were piled high, the shoemaker had finished his work. Nils walked back and forth on the floor and was quite a man. He must go out and find a puddle to wade

in—he wanted to know if they were waterproof. Martha and Hans sat in the living-room and thought: “Now, at any rate, he must feel thankful to us.”

But when he came in, the first thing he said was: “I wonder what mother will say when she sees how fine I am?” The same day he again begged for permission to go home. This time Hans promised to buy him a watch the first time he went to town.

At night, when Nils had been tucked in and everything was quiet, he would lie in bed and cry. A strange feeling began to take hold of him—he was selling his mother, bit by bit, for clothes and tall boots and a watch, and in order to become herr Hans and Martha had tricked him into it. He would get back at them when he was grown up some day.

The worst of all was that the master and mistress would watch him all day long. No doubt they thought he was so little that he must not be allowed out of their sight for a moment. One time he must go with Hans, another with the mistress, which was worse because she would always stroke him and pet him—huh! But one day when Hans had been to town he brought back a silver watch. It was wonderful. It ticked in his pocket early and late. He could take it out and look at it and see what time it was, just like a grown person. There was also a large silver chain which dangled from his little vest. He wondered if he must give back the watch and chain if he made up his mind to go home some day. He held the watch to his ear and swallowed the thought of his mother which came as a catch in his throat.

Was it to be expected that Knut would allow that little pig to go about with an air of importance, although he had read nothing? It was not hard for the grown-up folks to see that the two boys did

not get on well together. Did Nils have a black eye ?

One day, in the stable, Hans bent down, put his arm about his neck, and said :

"If you and Knut cannot get on together, why, I suppose, we can send him away."

Hans waited for an answer. Nils had his tall boots off. Now he was so big and mighty that he could tell Knut to go away if he wanted to. The next moment, however, he did not care to.

"No," he said, "Knut—he can stay as long as he likes so far as I am concerned."

But, nevertheless, he felt bigger after this. He went about with another manner and thought—anyway, Knut would do well to take care now.

One day Hans let Nils ride with him in the big sled on an errand to the store. The old fellow began to speak with unwonted kindness, and beamed with goodness. Nils feared what might come. Did he understand rightly ? Hans promised him a knife with a brass sheath if he would call Martha and him mother and father.

The boy blushed and turned away. It was impossible to get a word out of him.

If he should allow them to trick him into doing this also—to call these strange people mother and father, he would lose his real mother for ever. Did he wish to do that ?

On the evening of this day he did not come in when darkness fell. The maids went out to call him. No one answered. Terror seized everyone. They hunted indoors and outdoors. There was sleet and snow with a cold north wind. Martha and Hans wandered about, each with a lantern, calling "Nils ! Nils !" The hired men were sent to the neighbours.

Knut felt a strong grip on his shoulder. The master, who stood before him, shook him and wanted to know what he had done with Nils. They went to the cow-stable, the horse-stable, the granary, and the hay-loft. They raised their lanterns and called and called. Above the others rose the wailings of Martha: "Nils! Nils!" The lanterns moved among the buildings—at the smithy, the stabur, the wood-shed, and each person was telling where he or she had last seen him. Then they went out over the fields in the darkness, the flares of the lanterns moving unsteadily over the snow as they searched here and there. Martha wanted them to search in the well, and Hans poked in the frozen water with a long pole. But Nils was not to be found.

At last Kristian Haug returned from one of the neighbours and told that they had seen the boy go by at dusk and that he walked west, in the direction of the fishing village. All gathered about Kristian, and Martha held her lantern up to his face to see whether he was telling the truth.

"Well, I suppose he went home then," said Hans. All agreed. It was clear he had not met with an accident. He was on the highway and perhaps had been lucky enough to get a ride.

"Hitch up a horse, Kristian," said Hans, and walked toward the house.

"Are you going now—to-night?" asked Martha, as she followed him to the house, chilled through.

"Yes, it would not do to send anyone else," said Hans, making ready for the journey.

The sleigh-bells were heard in the yard, but soon grew fainter as Hans drove away. The mighty Hans Dyrendal went to fetch a little boy who did not want to be his heir, and had run away from him.

As the horse trotted along, and the snow beat upon his face, Hans looked carefully at the snow-drifts on both sides, to make sure that a little fellow over tired, had not gone to sleep in the snow and was being covered up.

At the same time there ran through his head something to the effect that he had lost at this game. You can swing yourself up in the world, Hans Lia. You can become Hans Dyrendal, with farm all paid for and money at interest, and a good reputation in the neighbourhood, and temperance and religion, but to get a little boy to like you, and live with you, and call you father—that you cannot do. No, there the other fellow holds the trumps. You may play against him anything you like. It is wrong. It is all wrong. But if you have not found it out before this, I suppose it is too late now.

And at the same time he realized how much he had changed during the few weeks he thought he had a son in the house. He had decided to plough more ground in the spring. Dyrendal was large enough for Martha and him, but not for Nils. He had decided to paint the house white. When he went to the stable he looked upon the horses with other eyes than formerly. They were no longer merely so much merchandise. He valued them not only in terms of money. Now they were his domestic animals which should remain on the farm. He would begin to breed beautiful animals in order to stock up Dyrendal. He felt more settled, also, in his own mind, because now his life pointed far into the future through Nils.

But the boy had run away. Hans felt he did not have the courage to go home to Martha unless he could bring back the boy.

The mistress of Dyrendal sat up late that night.

Finally, she went to bed, but she could not sleep. She listened for the sound of bells, although it seemed the boy must have had enough of a start to reach his home before Hans could overtake him.

The wind whined and whistled about the house. Martha saw her sister sitting there with her thin smile, surrounded by her little ones, and her sister seemed to say "He is not happy with you. A certain knack is necessary, and you do not have it, Martha. That is the reason you do not have a child. You do not have the knack. Everything near you freezes. If you stroke children with your hand, it makes them angry. You can bribe them to endure you for a time, but you can never in the world get them to open their hearts to you, or to come to you for comfort. You might as well give up the idea at once. Nils is happier with me, no matter how much of goods and gold you are able to offer him."

The wind blew constantly. The night was long. No bells were heard. If Hans should come back with the boy she would not be able to control herself, but would throw herself over him and press him to her heart. And the boy would, no doubt, try to break away from her, perhaps would strike her in the face.

She tossed about in bed and folded her hands and felt cold chills down her back. It was more than her body that froze. It is of no use, Martha. You might as well become hard as ice. The One above has decided it shall be so. He has condemned you to live your life in the cold.

Nils got so far along on his way before dark that he began to recognize the houses along the road. He was afraid someone would follow him, so he ran and panted and hurried on. But, as he came near

home, he began to fear, also, that he had done something foolish. At last he saw a light from his mother's house. He hiccupped and hurried on. Everyone in the house became excited when he came stumbling in. His mother took his hand and talked about so many things, but when she sat down upon a chair, he threw himself into her lap and began to cry.

At last he must tell that he had run away.

Both his mother and his brothers and sisters had got into the habit of thinking of him as the rich heir to Dyrendal. Now, perhaps, he had wrecked everything. As Nils sat and looked at the others he began to see that they were not well pleased—and he, poor fellow, had thought they would be so very glad to see him if he would only come home.

As he sat at the table, eating, sleigh-bells were heard outside. Again everyone became excited. They knew who it was. There was not time for Nils to run and hide before Hans Dyrendal entered the room with snow in his beard and on his coat.

"Have you seen my overseer anywhere about?" he said merrily, when he saw the boy was at the table, safe and sound, but with pale face.

Hans did not speak of returning immediately. He wanted the boy to be left alone for a while. Nils wondered that Hans should be so kind to him, but the next day his mother and brothers and sisters let him know that he must at least go back and ask forgiveness of auntie after frightening everyone so dreadfully.

The snow-storm continued throughout the next night, and the mistress of Dyrendal must remain alone.

When, on the third day, she saw Hans and the boy come driving up to the house, she realized that now



things could not be as they had been before. She did not want to have the same experience a second time. If he wanted to settle down there, he would be welcome. If he wanted to go away, why, then, in God's name, he would be just as welcome to do that.

It did not matter so much any more. There would have to be a limit to this begging, and humiliating oneself.

"So you have made a visit to your mother, Nils," she said, and tried to smile, as the boy came stamping in.

At this time great political storms swept over the land, and speakers went from the cities even to the outlying country districts. They thundered and threatened every misfortune if the farmers should vote for the other side.

The men sat in their homespun and listened attentively. The following Sunday, when they knew no man of importance was present, they formed into groups near the church, and began to discuss politics—they too. They read the papers now, and had heard so many speakers that they knew the catchwords. They shook their fists in one another's faces, and each swore that the other was a fool. Thin voices and coarse voices tried to drown out one another.

When the big master from Dyrendal arrived, he stood on the fringe of one group and listened with a very sober face. Then he whispered something to one of the men that made all of them laugh. They knew he was a conservative, but no one took it seriously, because the next moment he raised his chest and went over to the radical group, where the schoolmaster was speaking about freedom and fatherland. All at once Hans again whispered to one of the men, so that all could hear :

"Ask that fellow if his mother is as dirty as she used to be?" All began to laugh. As Hans went to another group all eyes were upon him. But the schoolmaster remembered what Hans had said the last

time he wrote an article for the paper on the tactics of the conservatives in this neighbourhood.

If a list of voters belonging to the opposition suddenly disappeared just as it was wanted, or if ballots, sent by a boy to some out-of-the-way place, were not delivered, folks would shake their heads and say - "There is only one man in this neighbourhood who could have done this"

It was this desire to toss up his neighbour in a blanket, figuratively speaking, that Hans had not quite overcome. As the election approached and became more interesting, however, Hans seemed to be just the one to go about and talk people into voting for the right side, because this work was very much like trying to convince a sensible man that a worn-out old nag was a prince of England.

It happened also that prayer meetings were held at Dyrendal. The house would be full of women in large shawls and men in damp homespun. On the bench beside the speaker would be the best people of the community, and chief among them, Hans himself, bearded, bald, pious.

When a hymn was sung, or when the speaker spoke about sin and grace, Hans would commune with his own secret thoughts. He remembered the time when he wandered over the land and traded and practised small deceits, and drank a glass, and sometimes thrashed a fellow he did not like. It was too bad the Lord was so much against all this. Why, in the days of the former master of Dyrendal, in this very room, handsome young men had put their arms about the waists of beautiful young girls, and danced and sung merry songs. It was no disgrace for them to be gay and jolly. It is strange about this thing--culture. If he had only learned more he wouldn't have to sit

here now and make an effort to behave well. Folks would allow him to click his heels together and kick as high as the ceiling once in a while. But, for all that, they had voted for him in the last election.

While the women sniffled and wept over their sins, there was one among them who sat erect and held her head high. It was the mistress herself. It was Martha. She had nothing to repent. She looked upon these girls, who, perhaps, got the one they wanted, and upon these women, surrounded by children, and she thought it might do them good to hear that they were big sinners, and that there would be a judgment day. It might do them good to hear about it.

The master and mistress of Dyrendal gave people plenty to gossip about. One day a poor woman might come and ask for a drop of milk. And Martha would invite her in and give her coffee, and would say, "Oh, there is no charge for the milk." But the next time the poor woman would come, the mistress would go about pale and cold as ice, and would show the poor creature the door, so that she would not dare to show herself for a long time.

A cottager's boy had built a little cottage and cleared a bit of ground on a hill-side. On the day of his wedding he received a fresh cow as a gift from Dyrendal. Such things did not happen in the days of the colonel. And, one day, Martha stood godmother to a child at a neighbour's house, and made the child a gift of fifty dollars.

Oh, yes, there was plenty for people in the neighbourhood to gossip about. They might talk behind the backs of the folks at Dyrendal, and both were suspected of a little of everything, but when they came driving to church, she in her black silk and he

big and mighty, folks stepped aside respectfully, and some would take off their hats.

It soon became the fashion that Martha should be the first lady at large weddings, and that she should act as hostess in order that everything might be done properly and according to the best usage. And the basket of food she would bring from home! Why—it was almost enough for a wedding by itself!

But there must be evil-minded people or political enemies, because rumours began to spread which were beyond belief. She, who was so rich and powerful—she—no, never in the world! But the rumour would not die. When she had been in a house one thing or another was missed—a silver spoon, a fork, sometimes even money. To be sure there were others who were suspected at first, but, in the end, all the evidence pointed to the first lady—to Martha. Of course, it could not have been Martha. Evil-minded people find so much to talk about.

Time passed. Nils had settled down at Dyrendal, but all understood that he went about moping and longing for home, although he no longer said anything about it. And he soon found that he was no longer the chief person, at least not in the eyes of the master. Now it was politics, elections, newspapers. Nils was seldom on good terms with Knut. He was mostly alone. Those grown-up thoughts, also, about being the heir, he felt, it would be best to keep to himself. All that he saw about him at Dyrendal in reality belonged to him. He must only remain there, behave well, and wait until he was grown up. At the same time, he did not forget who it was that had lured him away from his mother. If he spoke to one of them it was "Martha" or "Hans." No one could trick him into calling them anything else.

Nils had been at Dyrendal more than a year. Christmas was approaching, and the ice on the lake was hard and smooth. Just before dusk it swarmed with children and young people, who drifted hither and thither on skates, pulling down their caps to protect their ears against the cold, and shouting. During these days before the holidays the north wind roared night and day. Heavy, dark clouds rolled in from the sea, which were mirrored in the clear, smooth ice, so that it seemed as if the skaters skimmed over clouds of darkness and fire. If a person worked his way up against the wind, he could turn and stretch out his coat and sail. Hey ho—how the girls and boys shot by one another, very much like a flock of birds flying! The men from the hill country one day brought a large sled upon which they had rigged up a square sail. It became a ship full of wriggling bodies and kicking legs, which sailed up and down on the shining ice in the wind, followed by a swarm of skaters, some of whom skated backwards or wrote their names in the ice standing upon one foot, and, in the midst of the crowd, a tall, sedate man, who made long, powerful strokes here and there, but who looked upon himself as being above taking part in the sports of the crowd.

Knut had a friend who lived on one of the farms across the lake. Pauline Lund was her name. They met here, and he would push her ahead of him on the ice. On Sundays she sat with the choir, in her blue dress, and she had a wonderful voice.

One evening a flock of half-grown young people had gathered behind a point of land. Andreas, the sacristan's son, was the leader.

"What shall we arrange for Christmas?" he said.

"Yes, we ought to do something really fine this

year," several spoke up eagerly. The girls thrust forward their red cheeks excitedly, while more and more skaters joined the company.

The sacristan's boy saw that they were all school-mates and belonged to the best families, so he invited them to come to his house the third day after Christmas.

"Then you must come to my house the fourth day after Christmas," said Per Sund.

"And the fifth day to my house," said Gabriel Flyta.

On the edge of the crowd there were two who were very careful not to invite anyone to their house. They were Knut and Nils from Dyrendal. And as they skated home along the shore, they were not quite sure they had been invited by the others.

"You are only a herd-boy," said Nils, "so they did not mean you."

"And you are only a dirty beggar-boy, so no one had you in mind."

They worked their way in the dusk over the frosty hills, from which the snow had been swept by the wind. Before them lay the large house, with its long row of wallows that reflected the yellow and stormy sunset sky in the west.

"I wonder if we dare invite anyone?" said Knut, and stopped.

"I wonder," Nils smiled out of the right corner of his mouth, and his red, chubby face shone as he turned toward the dim light of the setting sun.

"We must get permission from the master and mistress first," said Knut.

"Yes, you ask them."

"No, that you must do. You are the son, you know."

"No, you know better how to use your tongue."

They trudged on. Both felt that the great lady of Dyrendal was not one they cared to go to about anything of that sort. If she were in the right mood, she might say, yes. But they had not the courage to ask her. They would not care to be known as her boys. They looked toward the large house, in which lights were now burning, and both felt that other boys had a better time of it than they. Dyrendal was not their home. The master and mistress of Dyrendal were not their parents, and therefore Christmas could not mean the same to them as it did to other boys and girls in the neighbourhood.

Nils decided he must take comfort in the fact that, anyway, he was the heir. But it was so long to wait until he was grown up.

"Must you go to the cow-stable to-night again?" said Hans to Martha. "It does not seem to be of much use to have a hired milkmaid?"

"Oh, the milkmaid is busy with other things," she answered. She put on the worst clothes she could find, lit a lantern, spread a fold of her dress around the lantern to protect it against the storm, and set out into the darkness. A flickering light indicated her movements on the path, over which snow had been blown into drifts, and Knut followed, carrying pails. The door to the cow-stable is hard to open, but once inside one is met with peace and warmth. The sheep and the cows speak their greeting. The pigs climb up on the side of the pen and grunt. Over the whole there is an air of welcome.

No, the mistress of Dyrendal is not compelled to do the milking, but if she enjoys being with her animals, why—— In here there is peace. There are two long rows of cows with their heads toward one another



and a passage-way between them. While Martha places hay before the cows, Knut cleans the stable preparatory to milking. There is meal to be prepared for the calves and the pigs, and leaves to be brought for the sheep. When each one has been fed there is a sound of peaceful swallowing and chewing throughout the entire stable. Martha sits down to milk. She rests her forehead against the warm side of the cow, and the stream of milk plays a tune of tip, tap on the bottom of the bucket as in former days.

The door flies open, and the storm rushes in, but it is only the milkmaid who comes in to milk on the other side, and the storm is soon shut out again.

Then again there is peace, whilst the north-west wind wails outside in the winter night. Martha enjoys peace of mind. She closes her eyes and croons. All these living beings that receive their food from her hands have become as a part of herself. Their peace becomes her peace. Perhaps these animals stand there and dream about the free life of the pasture during the long, bright summer. Or perhaps they have faint recollections of the time, long ago, when their forefathers roamed about on endless stretches of plain in strange lands far away.

Knut would stand near by and chatter. Lately he had read a great deal about politics, and he had come to believe that a plain cottager's boy might work his way up and become a great man, even if he could not go to war. He had thought he would study and become a popular speaker, because then he could scare an opponent out of his wits, even if he did not strike him dead, and so, in a way, win victories and become a conquering hero.

Knut had finished his work and moved carefully over the slippery floor. He raised the lantern above

the pens, in which red calves lay on beds of straw and chewed their cuds. He gave them his hand to suck, and spoke to them as if they were good friends.

"Well," said the mistress, as she sat milking in the dark, "if you become a big man some day and make a speech in the village, I promise to go there and to sit upon the front seat. Then we shall see if your head has been turned so that you will not remember me."

Christmas had come and gone. Parliament met somewhere far away in a city that was called Kristiania. That made the papers more interesting. Knut must now skate across the lake each evening and bring home the mail for the master of Dyrendal.

When the lamp was lit and the papers were spread out upon the long brown table in the living-room, then it was that the entire household was changed into a parliament.

Oh, these newspapers, which came to the out-of-the-way districts far in along the shore of some dark fjord, where all thoughts until now have been taken up with food and marriage and a shilling to be earned; besides, of course, prayer meetings and the fear of hell—these newspapers bring a fresher air into the mind and kindle new interests. They tell of happenings far away that give a new idea of the world. They give the picture of a man who did a great deal of good although he did not preach the Word of God. Then they tell about something that is called "tariff," and "finance," and "science," and "art." Then there is a funny story that really makes one laugh. And, besides, there is the Government, and customs of different kinds. All these things bring many new words one never heard of before, and make it necessary

to have ideas about things one never even dreamed existed.

There sits the master himself, at the head of the table, with spectacles, reading reports of the doings of Parliament, and, great heavens, how these speakers must be able to understand everything imaginable ! They talk about things so difficult that the mere name is enough to strike an ox dead. "Constitutional-Amendment" is bad enough for a mouth in which there is a juicy quid of tobacco. But what do you think of "Disqualification Procedure" ? All these things a person must know about if he wants to go to Parliament, so, in the end, one cannot get along with only what everybody understands—namely, economy and the Word of God.

Martha is reading the temperance paper. The two maids near the fire-place are making their spinning-wheels hum. Nils is trying to make out the announcements in the local paper, and Knut is devouring a continued story about love. Lars Hafella is nodding over his pipe, and Kristian Haug is sitting near the north wall, with his back turned, mending a shoe.

"Great heavens !" said the master aloud—and all heads were raised. "Here the Parliament gives a pension to a captain who is rich as Croesus !"

"I suppose they depend on men like you to pay taxes and pay taxes until you stand there without a shirt to your back," said Martha, looking up from her paper.

"Mr President !" said Knut, and rose. Everyone gave a start, then burst out laughing. Even Martha laughed so violently that her paper fell to the floor.

Knut made a speech in defence of pensions, and said exactly the same things that were said in the Parliament by those who defended the practice.

"Mr. President!" said Hans, looking around over his spectacles and continuing the joke. He maintained that expenses should be cut down, so that the taxes would not become too much for the people to bear.

It became almost a speech. He was training himself to express his opinion about new and difficult things.

"Mr. President!" said Martha abruptly. This made a stir. It was not often the great lady took part in a joke. She raised her eyebrows and said sarcastically: "I wonder how many of the great men in this Parliament would like to clean out the cow-stable for me."—Then she smiled and looked about for approval.

"The representative from the southern counties ought to stick to the subject," said Knut, and as it sounded exactly as in Parliament, everyone must laugh again.

To the surprise of everyone, Jonetta stopped her spinning-wheel and said: "Mr. President!"

"The Lord help us, now the women folks are beginning," said Kristian Haug, turning his blind eye toward the lamp.

All eyes were upon the blond girl with the rosy cheeks.

"I propose a pension for those who have only one eye," she said, and began to spin again.

This time Nils was the only one who smiled. Kristian Haug bent down over his work, and Hans said: "That is what you got for throwing your sweetheart down from the attic last Sunday night, Kristian."

Bang went the storm-door; someone stamped the snow off his feet; and in came the white-bearded schoolmaster. He had read the papers and thought he would step in for a chat. Could it be possible that the liberals really wanted to dethrone the King?

On stormy winter nights it sometimes happened that Martha could not go to sleep. She thought about Nils

He grew and became more plump and red-cheeked, but it was always another woman that filled his mind. She herself would never become anything more than just one to be endured. She might be as good to him as she pleased.

Often when she looked into the future she would literally grow cold. What if she were condemned to bring up this boy, and then, some fine day, he should bring misfortune upon both her and Hans? Sometimes when she looked at him she would become frightened—the son, the heir, their comfort in old age! That is the difference between having an adopted son and one who is really one's own.

Some day he might begin to wait impatiently for them to die, as a bird of prey waits for its victim to fall. Such he might become. Was she condemned to bring up a bird of prey—and to be to him as a mother? Was it possible? Why—the One above who rules over everything could not place a more terrible curse upon a woman. But in that case there would be an accounting between Him up there and her.

It was thoughts like these that lately had made her so gloomy and hard that she often felt like clenching her fists in the very face of heaven itself.

It happened sometimes on a stormy night that she would steal out of bed, dress warmly, and go out into the darkness. It eased her mind to be out in a storm. One may perhaps recognize oneself in a storm, in which yellow, black, and bloody masses of cloud rush along and end in an angry whirlwind.

It is a relief to be out in such weather. She stops,

looks about, and walks again. Everything is asleep. She alone wanders about, aimlessly. Now and then her face is lit up dimly as she raises her eyes in order to look toward the sky.

There is a picture-book up there that interprets powers within yourself, which can neither speak nor think, but which tumble about in your mind. There—up there you see them again. There—in the bloody storm-clouds in the sky to-night.

Her shawl and dress flutter in the wind. She stops, and walks on—stops and walks on. Everything is changed when one walks alone on such a night. Even if you had married the one you wanted, you would still be an old woman now. Even if you had sons and daughters, you would still have to die some day. Even if you succeed in making your husband a member of Parliament, so that he rises as high in the world as the forester at Myr, he is and always will be a fool.

The scores to be settled with Him up there behind the storm are big. One cannot put up with everything and always be humble. We have stood in the presence of great ones before. There might rise up in the heart a desire to sin—to steal, to lie, to curse, to cheat, to commit a big sin, the sound of which will be heard in all the heavens.

When the folks at Dyrendal rise in the morning, the mistress is asleep in her bed as usual. No one suspects that she was out during the night and held converse with the storm. But if a poor old woman should come on such a day and ask for milk, the mistress of Dyrendal would show her the door.

A LITTLE girl with her finger in her mouth stood on the doorstep at Dyrendal. When Kristian Haug passed she said she would like very much to speak with her brother, Knut.

It was Gunhild. She had her grandmother's grey shawl over her head. The ends were crossed on her breast and tied in a large knot on her back. She looked old for her size. When her brother came at last, her little pale face became solemn and commanding.

"I came to say for grandmother that if you have forgotten us, we have not forgotten you."

"I wish you would tell grandmother that we have been very busy here," said Knut. "But now, during the holidays I have been thinking of making a trip home."

When Knut had gone the girl waited for a moment on the door-step. She thought someone might invite her in and offer her cake and coffee. But the door of the great house remained closed, so she trudged home again.

The next Sunday morning Knut took the road which skirted the hills. He walked slowly and whistled. Although, of course, it was always a wonderful thing to go home, he felt that now he belonged to the great world. He felt he had outgrown the narrow life in the little fisherman's cottage where all thoughts and cares centred about food to-day and death and salvation to-morrow. Whenever he went there he

felt that he was going backward, down to childhood and ignorance again. And yet his grandmother was there, and his brothers and sisters were there, and if there was anyone in the world he cared for, it was his grandmother and his brothers and sisters.

Knut was in the confirmation school and was fifteen years old. It seemed to him the world was becoming colder and harder each day. It is easy enough, as long as you are little, to put on airs and boast of what you intend to become when you grow up some day. You chop wood or you clean the stable, and at the same time your head is full of the French Revolution, or the people on Mars—that is easy enough. But when you wake up from your dreams, begotten of books, and the first thing you see is the patches on your pants—what then?

Knut whistled and walked and walked and whistled. Of course, there must be some way out! He pulled his hat down on one side and began to sing. A way must be found, a way must be found, tra-la! There, on the shore of the fjord, are two tiny cottages in which poor men live. There are boats on the beach. Fishing-nets have been hung up to dry. Although it is June, the west wind is whipping up the fjord, making it dark, with here and there white combers.

A little of the arrogance of Dyrendal clung to him as he entered and said good day. The grandmother rocked the cradle. She bade him good day, and asked him to sit down. His small brothers and sisters flew to him, all speaking together, and asked why he did not bring a horse so that they might drive.

It happened, as it always did, when at last he sat there, that he inhaled the peculiar, dear fragrance



of home. It was the twigs of juniper on the floor, the brush of heather behind the stove, the odour of fur coverlets, of clothes, of children, of coffee. And the clock on the wall, decorated with painted flowers, the old tiled stove with the crocodile on it, the cracked timber walls—oh, all was familiar, and all brought back memories of his childhood.

If only it had not been the red-haired stepmother who now came in, her face wet.

"Is that you, Knut, out for a walk to-day?" she said, drying her face with the towel which hung near the stove.

Knut saw that she would soon have another little one. He thought of his father, and felt miserable and dreadfully ashamed.

Just then the father came in, in his shirt-sleeves and with his vest unbuttoned, broad-shouldered, bearded, heavy. His light-brown hair was curly and attractive.

"Good day," he said. "Are you out for a walk?" He walked heavily in his slippers to the bench before the long table and sat down, but he could not find much to say, for he felt it was not on his account the boy had come.

Gunhild poked her yellow head with braided hair in through the kitchen door, and asked Knut to come out there. A moment later she rapped on the window for the three youngest to come also. The father sat soberly on the bench at the table and bit his nails. He saw through the window that his five children sought refuge in the barn. Now Knut would teach them to despise their father, as he did.

Knut sat upon the barn floor surrounded by his four brothers and sisters. They looked upon him as a saviour. Several times each week Gunhild had

told them that some day, when Knut was grown up, he would help them all to get away, and they would not have to live with their stepmother any more.

Then they began to speak about their mother. They remembered something new about her each time, both when she walked about and was well, and when she became sick and could not get up any more.

To-day the youngest brother remembered something. It was when he was carried outdoors and lay under a tree upon a fur coverlet and smiled, while the others played and had a good time near by.

"Don't you want to come to see me, too?" said the grandmother, when the children came in.

The father still sat on the bench. He saw his mother and his eldest son go into the bedroom and shut the door, and he knew they would whisper to one another about him.

He began to rock the cradle in which lay his youngest child, the child of his second wife. He sighed, and thought: "There is much in the world that is heavy to bear."

In the bedroom the grandmother had her bed, her old faded commode, a small table with a Bible and a hymn-book on it, and a well-scoured coffee-pot that stood on the stove and boiled.

It was touching to drink coffee in grandmother's room, for he knew her only income was from an old, grey, speckled hen, which now and then laid an egg.

"Help yourself, now," she said, and put the sugar-bowl on the table.

Then she told him confidentially, in a low tone of voice, her daily troubles, as if he were a grown-up man of wide experience.

While he listened to her, happenings flashed through his mind from the great world of which the papers told. He wondered what might be happening to General Boulanger. His youngest brother opened the door and wanted to be with them, but the father called him back, and the grandmother shut the door carefully.

"Of course, it would be pretty hard for the poor children," she said, in a low tone of voice, turning her old face toward the window, "if I didn't give them a bit to eat on the sly once in a while. But, of course, it isn't so easy for me either, as the hen doesn't lay more than one egg a day. I must have a little good cream for the coffee, and a little brown sugar for my cough so that it does not become too bad. But, then, there is the food!" She wiped a tear from her eye with a finger, and sighed. "I simply can't get down that pickled herring and dried fish; but when a person doesn't have a shilling for a little fresh fish, why— Oh, well! Of course, I don't suppose the Lord will make me wait much longer."

And poor Knut did not have a shilling to give her either. He had spent the few crowns he received as wages for books.

When Knut went away, his grandmother and brothers and sisters accompanied him as far as the gate. There the children had to turn back.

She walked slowly, her hands folded over her stomach, and bent slightly toward Knut, because she had so many things to talk to him about confidentially. Knut's thoughts wandered again, this time to Bismarck's speech in the Reichstag; but only for a moment—grandmother's voice was so dear.

Yesterday her daughter-in-law had refused to let her have a bit of butter on her bread. And a few

days ago she beat the youngest boy almost to death. And the father—why, he was not the same person since he brought that woman into the house.

"But this I want you to remember, Knut—that commode of mine—you are going to have that when I am gone. And the six handkerchiefs you gave me last Christmas I want Gunhild to have. They are in the drawer of the commode, on the right-hand side. And the black skirt which is hanging in the attic, and which I have not worn since I was in church four years ago—that I want you to keep until you get a wife of your own some day. She will not be so fine, I hope, that she will think it not good enough for her.

"Well—now I think it is best for me to go back," she said, and turned around.

"Oh no, can't you go a bit farther?"

She shaded her eyes with her hand, and looked toward the fjord.

"No, it will be so far to go back again."

They separated. He stood for a moment and looked after her. She seemed tired and weary. The wind ruffled her white hair. She coughed as she returned, slowly, to the sorrows of her old age, out there on the bleak shore of the fjord, swept by the everlasting wind.

Knut went his way. He had received something from the simple home which was more precious than the books and the papers at Dyrendal. It was like a hymn which kept running through his mind. He would hum it quite unconsciously, while his body swayed to the rhythm of it.

The June days became warmer. The nights became lighter. Many things ferment in the mind when a

who has just read a story about peasant life by Björnson. The horses may be in the pasture quite near, and they may be miles away out in the hills. The whole thing is thrilling. So much can happen, and the night is so light.

Dyrendal sinks farther and farther below Knut, but now he has other eyes with which to see. The dew on the alder-trees, the red clouds in the sky—all these he had seen often before; but now he saw for the first time that they were beautiful. At last he trotted to the top of Lookout Hill, as he had done a hundred times before, but seeing the blue strip of ocean far to the north was a new adventure. He stopped to meditate. The landscape below him, with lake and forest and hill, takes on a light-blue tone which seems to be wafted toward him. He wonders if this is not like loving a woman. At any rate, he sees Pauline in the midst of it all. It seems a miracle to be the person he is and to stand there and breathe and live.

He runs over marsh and meadow again, becomes wet from the leaves which strike him in the face, and gets his feet wet from wading in the marshes. The clouds in the eastern sky begin to flame, announcing a new day. As he runs along, he stops now and then to pick a white anemone, which he places in his hat. Over the marsh a brook, in which the red sky is mirrored, winds its way, but he must on, far in among the hills, to see if there are any horses to be found. Some dark, blurred objects are moving down a hill-side toward the north, and a thrill of terror shoots through the night. He is alone, and bears have been seen this year.

At last! In there, on a green spot, brown, black, and white horses are lying, their heads bent toward

the ground. One of them is standing up, his head toward the wind, keeping watch while the others are sleeping. The faded hill-side above the peaceful group stands out against the reddish sky.

Knut stops. He sees the bay mare with the colt lying in the centre, and the others around them as if for protection. This habit the tame farm-horses have, no doubt, inherited from their forefathers who lived on the wild steppes. The only sound heard is the trickling of a brook.

The horses get on their feet as Knut approaches. Their heads are erect, their manes fluttering in the wind. Is freedom at an end? Knut has salt in his pocket. Soon they form a circle about him, though still at a distance. Motherly horses take his measure. Young horses with flaming eyes are ready to run away any moment. There is an odour of ammonia from their strong, sound bodies. One horse stretches out his head for some salt, then another, and in a moment Knut's hands are being licked by five or six tongues. The colt waves his curly little tail, and also wants a taste. But the salt is too strong. He sneezes and shakes his head.

At last Knut has bridled the white fjord horse, mounted him, and rides at a trot over the heath. The other horses follow. The ground rings under the tramping hoofs. This is grand. The horse breaks into a gallop. Knut's hat, decorated with white anemones, flutters in the wind. Hip ho! Now he is no longer a herd-boy, but a chieftain of the Numidians, leading their Cavalry. Having reached Lookout Hill, he sees Dyrendal again far below. Fjord and lake mirror the rosy dawn, but all are fast asleep, although the cock is on the door-step of the stabur and swears it is already late.

Oh for a haying day! Old and young were busy raking, and talked and laughed as if it were a wedding. The grey carpet of new-mown hay on the hill-side became alive with bare-headed men and women in fluttering white sleeves. The sun was scorching hot. Faces perspired. The odour of hay made nostrils quiver. A steamer on the bay whistled. On the fjord a schooner raised her white sails. During moments of silence the sound of waves lapping the beach could be heard. Now and then the odour of herring was wafted up on the breeze. A boat had made a catch last night. The boat, with a white stripe at the water-line, lay bobbing in the waves a short distance from shore. On shore the fishing-nets, glittering with fish scales, had been hung to dry.

"You are wonderful at raking," said Jonetta to Kristian Haug, as he worked beside her.

"Oh, there is no use being lazy," he answered. His face brightened because she praised him. He felt he must be more industrious with his hands because he had only one eye.

Poor Kristian did not have an easy time. One day she would make eyes at him and would let him imagine she was in earnest. And, one night during the holidays, she did not say no to a strange suitor. These women—these infernal women!

Hullo, there comes Knut with the bay mare down the hill!

While Knut was spreading the hay in the wagon and tramping it down, the others try to cover him up. "Hey there—stop that!" His eyes and his throat are full. He sneezes, and throws a handful of hay in the face of Karen, the pale girl. However, the load grows under him, and, at last, it seems to those on

the ground as if he is tramping up there just under the sky. Now, then, that is enough! He climbs down, snatches the lines, and the horse must make three attempts before she can move the load. To circle up over the steep hills without tipping over is no easy matter. "Gee up, there!" The horse strains at the load, puffs, and must stop often in order to get her breath. In the stable, the colt—poor creature—whines because it has been shut in. Nils appears with his wagon empty. He is coming back for another load.

"You must not drive the mave so hard," he says. He likes to show his authority, and to keep his eye on everything.

"Oh, you hold your tongue! Do you want to teach me how to drive?"

At last the load thunders up over the bridge leading to the second story of the barn and through the door, inside. There Lars Hafella stands ready to unload.

Hans wiped the sweat from his brow, and sat down in the midst of the rush to take a smoke. Large, friendly fields lay about him and beamed upon him. Again he remembered a word from the report of the doings of Parliament which it was so difficult to twist one's tongue around: "Disqualificati——" No, the Devil, that isn't right. He would look it up in the papers after supper.

The papers, and his interest in elections, had made the world larger for Hans than it had ever been before. There was something behind these mountains that shut him in. There were elections at places which were called Hedemarken, Toten, Smaalenene. It was strange how large the world was. In the old days he would have spells when he felt he simply must go



out on long journeys to trade. Now he felt he would like to travel around and talk politics. Best of all—but he did not dare tell this to Martha—best of all, he would like to take some of the big politicians by the nose.

A man with light hair and gold ear-rings came up from the beach carrying a bailing bucket full of shining and bloody fresh herring.

"If you do not scorn to accept it," he said, "why——"

Hans stroked his forehead, shook his head, and said it was too much. But before the generous one was ready to go he had succeeded in making known that he would like to ask a small favour. Might he cut some brush for his sheep in the north meadow? Hans knew from experience what such a gift of herring meant. But he kept a sober face, and thought for a moment, and finally said he guessed it would be all right. The fisherman whistled as he went away, because he had been well paid for his herring.

At Dyrendal the rush increased toward noon, because a cloud had appeared in the northern sky. Hans took off his shoes and stockings and ran about barefoot.

"You are likely to have an accident," said Peter Erhgen.

"Don't worry! The person who made these boots for me made only one pair," he said, stroking his bare foot with his hand, "but he made them waterproof."

"Ding, dong," rang the dinner-bell.

Knut and Nils hastened to unhitch their horses, raced down the hill, tore off their clothes, and jumped into the lake.

They were so taken up with splashing and ducking one another that they did not notice the wicked

Jonetta, who approached as stealthily as a cat, took their clothes, and ran up the hill toward the house.

Laughter was heard from those who stood on the hill and saw the deed, and finally a shout was heard from the lake.

The first thought of the boys was to run after Jonetta; for it would not do to let anyone see them stark naked.

All were seated at the table eating their dinner when the mistress found out why the two boys were not there.

At first she laughed with the rest, but soon she went out, and found the clothes in the hall, and threw them out in the yard. She had seen two heads peeping out from behind the hedge near by.

"Good Heavens!" exclaimed Jonetta, when they came in at last. "Have you no sense of shame—you run around stark naked in broad daylight!"

"You just wait," said the two boys.

After dinner, when they were working in the field nearest the house, Hans decided he would drive. He took charge of the white fjord horse. When the wagon was loaded, he sat on the load with his feet dangling over the horse's back. And he drove, not at a walk, and not at a trot, but at a gallop over field and road. He thundered over the bridge and into the barn like a storm-wind.

"Now he is crazy again," said Peter Eriksen, and shook his head.

Poor Whitey was dripping wet, and her lungs worked like a pair of bellows. Hans had one of his spells again. But what if he did—couldn't he afford to drive one of his horses to death if he liked?

All stopped to look at him as he made the poor horse haul one heavy load after the other at a wild gallop.

"You should drive that way with the bay horse," said Jonetta innocently. All knew that if he tried it, the mistress herself would come out and have a word to say.

Just as Hans drove in the last load, it thundered, and the storm broke.

When the two horses at last were free from their harnesses, the rain fell in large drops. Whitey shambled off a short distance, lay down wearily, rolled over once, twice, several times, and remained lying on the ground for a time, too tired to eat. The bay mare stood up. Her colt, which had been given his freedom, came to his mother, and sucked and wagged his curly tail, while the mother lowered her head to the colt's horn.

The sound of the violent rain upon the shingle roofs of the buildings was like the beating of drums, and the air was full of the odour of new-mown hay, made stronger by the moisture.

When all had gone to bed the two maids began to shriek. They jumped out of bed and waved their arms in the air.

"What in the name of God is the matter?" called the mistress, looking in through the attic door. In a moment everyone was up. What could be the matter?

"There are wasps in the bed!" shouted the girls, and struck out with their arms harder than before.

The hired men also began to wave their arms and to swear. "The Devil—that one got me right on the nose!"

Angry wasps were buzzing everywhere in the attic,

and soon both men and girls rushed to the door to get out.

The two boys had received permission to sleep in the hay-loft that night. They were standing at the door in the wall of the loft doubled up with laughter, while the grown folks, with shouts and shrieks, came flying out of the house in their night-clothes.

The boys had had their revenge.

It will be a strange thing if the mistress of Dyrendal does not get her husband into Parliament. It is no joke to oppose him once he has made up his mind to do anything, but God help the person who seems to Martha to oppose him in this matter. Hans may be defeated this time, and the next time, but there will be another election after that, and she is not one who gives up at the first sign of trouble.

In the meantime, the son grew larger and stronger, and became more and more useful on the farm. He was well built and ruddy, and his light-brown hair was thick as fur. He had not become to Martha what she once had dreamed. No, far from it—but now she also had other things to think about. Nils began to fit into the daily life of the farm. He stood above the servants, and always took the part of the master and mistress, whether at home or abroad. He did not say much. When others talked about newspapers or books, he sat quietly with a little smile in the right corner of his mouth. But in the field he proved himself a better workman than many a full-grown man. "There comes the overseer," the servants would say when he approached.

Nils was in the confirmation class, and although he was still so young, he understood there were many things that the master of Dyrendal neglected. When the bell called them in to meals, all the others dropped whatever they happened to have in their hands and rushed in. Nils, on the other hand, might find that

some of the horses needed to be watered, or a wagon greased in order to be ready for the next work period, or a bit of harness, which someone had dropped where he stood in the field, hung in its place in the stable. The master also often did things that Nils thought were all wrong. For instance, when Lars Hafella went to America, he promoted Knut Hamren to hired man with man's wages. Knut—hired man—at Dyrendal! He who would stand there half the time and stare and look down and do nothing! He had a big mouth and was very important, that cottager's boy, because he had read a book or two more than other folks. And if he said anything in the house, half of the folks would make a great ado, and laugh, and think it was wonderfully well said. But if he, Nils, the heir, asked him to do something, he would only talk back and be impudent. But he would do well to take care. After to-day would come another day.

Nils did not seem to care for amusements in the company of other young people, or for going to the village. Knut said it was because he was afraid something might be carried off from the farm when he was not there to look after things.

Perhaps there was some truth in that, without Nils really knowing it himself. For the farm, and everything on it that was worth money, had become his only comfort since the day he discovered that he would be compelled to settle down on Dyrendal.

Each time he had gone through the woods and visited his mother he was so light-hearted and happy that he sang. But when he came back he understood from the master and mistress that he had done something he should not have done.

The evening before Confirmation Day, the mother and oldest daughter drove up to Dyrendal, and Nils stood behind the seat in the gig. He had run to meet them some distance down the road.

Martha stood in a window behind the curtain, and she looked, not at her sister, but at Nils. Many a gift had he received from her and Hans, but never had she seen his face as bright as it was now.

Sunday morning was clear and bright. The hills stood in red and yellow autumn colours. Hans was up bright and early ready to start on a tour of inspection. Nils, who was about to bring down some horses, accompanied him. They walked through the green meadow side by side—Hans, large and bearded, Nils smaller but well built and robust, thoughtful about everything, although he was to stand on the church floor that very day. They crossed a field and passed by golden shocks of grain. There was an odour of straw and grain.

"I wonder if it is dry?" said Hans.

Nils did not reply at once, but stopped to put his hand between the sheaves.

"If we have weather like this one day more," the boy then said, "I think we can haul it in."

They stood and deliberated together almost as equals. Hans Dyrendal had a son at last. Before them lay the landscape in an autumnal haze. The church bells rang. Red, white, and black cows were tethered on the grassy slopes.

When it was about time to start for church, Nils came in dressed in a suit of duffel and thin-soled shoes with elastic sides. Martha went about sprinkling perfume on the handkerchiefs of all who were going to church.

"It seems to me your trousers are a trifle long," said the mother to Nils. She sat near the door as if she were a stranger.

Martha turned her head toward her sister.

"As we have had a tailor from out of town to make his clothes, I think the trousers will do," she said, and smiled.

"Oh, yes, yes, of course! I didn't mean that they are not all right," said the sister submissively.

It was a great day for Hans. He was to appear in church for the first time with his new overcoat. It had never happened before in this parish that a simple farmer had tried to imitate the great in that way. Was it strange, then, that he should be worried? As he came down the stairs, wearing tall boots, a plush hat, and the blue overcoat, which dangled about his legs, he felt as if he were to stand before the minister that day and did not quite know his lesson. There would be eyes on him at the entrance to the church. And there was the bay mare hitched to the Surrey—that fine equipage which had never been used before! That was, no doubt, the doings of Nils; or, perhaps, of Martha.

"No, no!" said Hans, grinning and shaking his head. "That is too much all at once: both the coat and the Surrey—I couldn't think of that!"

"Oh, I suppose you have paid for both of them," said Martha, who, upon this occasion, was very anxious to outshine even the bailiff's wife.

"Never in the world! We'll use the gig," the master said, with authority.

Thus two gigs drove away. At first Nils rode behind with Hans and Martha, but soon he jumped off their gig and went to ride with his mother. The lake was smooth. Many rowed to church; others



drove; others, again, walked. All the roads were full of people. Dogs barked; horses neighed. People swarmed among the wooden crosses surrounding the church, some of which were slanting. The bell rang. Many parents drove up to the gate on this day with a son or a daughter who was to be confirmed, but when the master and mistress of Dyrendal drove up, they were alone.

It was Martha's sister who drove up with a son to be confirmed.

Because of the blue overcoat, Hans went about among the men with a somewhat timid expression. He rewarded a friendly word with a smile. He was very condescending and shook hands with even poor fishermen. He did not pretend to be an important man. In fact, he was the lowliest one among them. Finally, the bailiff came and began to talk with him. That stiffened him up somewhat. Now he was at least as good as the sacristan, who was the candidate of the opposition party. Didn't he look as if he were as good a man as the sacristan? Later, folks could see his broad back as he sat beside the bailiff in one of the front pews. Martha thought, with just a touch of pride: "Yes, that is the master of Dyrendal."

The choir gallery awakened. The organ pealed forth its call. It was an old wooden church with white pillars and solid timber walls, painted red. The hymn put life into the many carved figures—the two apostles above the pulpit with their book and key, the two angels above them with extended wings. Moses stood in the chancel beside the altar holding his tablets of stone upon which the law was inscribed. The little church seemed to be a living Bible.

Martha felt that under the influence of the hymn she lost power over herself. Her mind tumbled about in other kingdoms than that of her daily life. She felt as if she were swept along on the crest of a wave. She hummed the hymn, but her eyes were fixed upon the painting above the altar.

A woman in black kneels at the foot of the Cross. It is a mother. Her Son hangs on the Cross over her head. His hands and His feet are pierced through. His body is twisted with pain. The church echoes with the hymn, and He says: "Father, into Your hands I commend My Spirit." Do you hear, Martha—that woman is His mother.

Little by little Martha is swept nearer to this woman. She understands her, imagines herself in her place, their lives intermingle. Once the Crucified One was a little boy. He followed His mother about and hung in her skirts and, no doubt, put His finger in His mouth and said little simple things—He, too. And the mother was proud, and felt secure because no other woman had given birth to Him. Not even her own sister could say He belonged to her. Then He began to grow up. And there was no one outside of the house He constantly longed for. If, one day, He became sick, He would throw His arms around His mother's neck, and when He became well, there was no joy like her joy. Then He became very wise and instructed in the temple, and the mother learned how clever He was. She said nothing, but it became even more blessed to toil for Him. Then—then—well, there He lies now. But He still belongs to her. What woman is there who would not extend her arms to this mother and say: "I would exchange all the glories of the world for your present sorrow." Even happy mothers would beg for it. How much more, then, those women who

feel that their hearts are empty, and who seek for mere worldly honour and power, in order to forget, forget——

Thus it happened that Martha's thoughts once more took wing. As once before she sang the words of the hymn, but her mind sang a hymn of its own.

"Our hymn is to You who kneel there, above the altar. Your suffering is sacred. Your lot is the greatest that can come to anyone. Take us women up to You and let us partake of Your soul—that we ask of You, who are the hope and consolation of all the women on earth."

To-day Martha made no demand on God for happiness. She had no scores to settle with Him. She saw a way through infinite difficulties, which, at the same time, led up to Him. This way was not through the Son upon the Cross, but through His mother—through her who became sanctified by her suffering for her Son—for a child—the salvation of all women.

The congregation sang. The hymn carried her along. Martha forgot who she was.

The young folks walked out upon the floor in the centre aisle. On the one side were the girls with hymn-book and handkerchief, on the other side the boys. Nils was there—the son she had borrowed of another. He was better dressed than any of his comrades. The tuft of hair over his forehead stood straight up. But he was handsome. He seemed happy. Was it because someone he cared for was present?

Many a woman's eyes from the women's side of the church sought their own among those to be confirmed. Their eyes were filled with tears. And the young folks dared not look back. It would be painful,

and their knees might grow weak. It was better to cough and blow the nose and look down at the hymn-book.

Martha looked at Nils, until she noticed there was another woman who also looked at him. Then she turned her eyes again towards the altar.

It did not look as if there would be sleighing on Christmas Day. There was no snow—only black frost and wind, one day after the other. Nils and Knut were in the wood-shed splitting wood for the holidays. They were sufficiently friendly to talk about girls, and which *one they intended to meet on the third day after Christmas*. Now and then one of them would step outside and look toward the north to see if there were any signs of snow, because the drive with sleighs and sleigh-bells on Christmas Day to the chapel, situated in an out-of-the-way corner of the parish, had been, for many generations, an annual event for all of the young people of the parish.

From time to time Jonetta, with her hair fluttering in the wind, would come for an armful of wood.

"I am afraid someone might put his arm around your waist this Christmas," said Knut.

"You mind your own business—you never dare to look at a girl."

Away she went with the wood. The north wind snatched sticks of wood from her and sent them whirling down the path.

On Christmas Eve everyone in the house had to take a bath. Clean linen hung around the fireplace, and the mistress herself scrubbed the backs of the men so that the soap foamed. Outside the storm-wind howled.

There was one who schemed to escape taking a

bath—that was the master himself: he was deathly afraid of having water touch his body, but this time escape was impossible even for him.

Toward evening Knut came in shouting: "Now it is snowing."

The others, whose faces shone from their recent scrubbing, rushed to the outer door, stretched their hands out into the darkness, then came stumbling in to the lamplight. Yes—there were large white snowflakes on their hands. "It is true," said several voices; "it is snowing."

There might still be sleighing before morning. Nils and Knut had decided to sleep on the floor before the fire-place, to see whether it was true that the person who wakes up first on Christmas morning finds grains of wheat under the table.

The lamp burned throughout the long winter night at Dyrndal, as at every other house in the parish. And the people slept—all except Kristian Haug, who lay awake in his bed in the attic and worried because he was certain some strange suitor would come to see Jonetta during the holidays, and he could think of no way of preventing it.

"What does it concern you?" she would reply whenever he referred to the matter.

The two boys before the fire-place forgot about the grains of wheat under the table. They were awakened by the mistress, who stood before them with coffee and coffee-bread.

At the break of day the young folks went to the windows to see whether there was snow on the ground. To their disappointment the wind had swept it away, leaving the ground bare in many spots.

"Pshaw, then we'll drive on the ice," said Kristian Haug.

"But are the horses shod for it?" asked Haas.

Hadn't he learned to know Nils yet? Didn't he know that boy could stand in the smuthy and put calks in the horses' shoes? Or did he imagine Nils might not know that the shoes belonged under the hoofs of the horses?

Three sleighs, carrying the women folks, moved down the brown, frozen hill toward the ice. Shawls fluttered in the wind. The men ran beside the sleighs and pushed to help them over the sandy places. The frozen lake, under the dark, clouded sky, was not a mirror to-day. There were greyish-white spots, and dark spots of frozen slush. Only here and there the ice was smooth and bright.

The wind was sharp. Faces became blue and eyes watery as they set out, with the wind from the side, over the frozen lake.

Several sleighs were seen under the opposite shore. The horses began to trot. Their manes and tails fluttered in the wind. The ice sputtered under the sharp shoes. A cracking and snapping was heard as the ice was rent by the cold.

Whitey, the little old fjord horse, that many a fool had driven almost to death, was perfectly wild to-day under the sleigh-bells. Knut could hardly hold him in. When Kristian Haug with the bay mare came up beside Knut they must race over the lake, which was several miles long.

The women folks laughed. Hills and houses on shore seemed to fly past them. The bay mare took long steps, although she was heavy on account of the many colts she had had. But Whitey's little feet worked like drum-sticks, and gradually he forged ahead of her. Nils rode in a cutter, and wore his master's overcoat with fur collar raised to protect

his ears. His large, young horse was warmed up, and trotted so fast that every moment he threatened to break into a wild gallop.

Kristian sat beside Jonetta. Her face was rosy and beautiful under the grey kerchief. Kristian was thinking he would ask the master if he might have a small place to clear for himself very soon.

Before anyone knew what had happened, the bay mare lay on her side and swept the ice clean for some distance. She had lost a shoe, and had slipped and fallen down. She tossed about wildly, trying to get on her feet, but fell down again and nearly broke the shafts.

"There are shoes and tools in the box under the seat!" shouted Nils, who had thought of everything—and his horse dashed by, breaking into a gallop.

Knut finally succeeded in stopping Whitey, and came back to help. Lying on her side with her head raised to see what was going on, the bay mare was shod on the ice just before daybreak.

Then the sleigh-bells echoed again over the frozen lake.

"To-night Knut is going a-wooing," said Hans on the third day of Christmas week. He had found out that the two boys were planning something they did not want anyone to know about.

When Knut went out to feed the horses and close the stable for the night, Nils shambled out after him, as if he were coming back in a moment, but a moment later they pulled their caps down over their ears and set out over the hills in the dark.

Hey—a dark object slipped past them. They stopped.

"That was Kristian Haug," said Knut.



"Yes, so it was," thought Nils. "To-night he will, no doubt, be prowling around with a knife in his hand. I pity the poor fellow who is coming to see Jonetta."

The night was cold and dark, with strong north wind and stars. It was something new for these two to be out so late at night at this time of year, and it seemed strange to see the lights go out at the farm-houses scattered about. They felt that they were left alone with the cold and the night. But that was exactly what they wanted. Although they were constantly nagging at one another, they had agreed for several weeks that this Christmas they would call on some girls. At last they would be grown-up men—they, too.

There was still one light burning on the opposite side of the lake, and along the shore of the fjord there was a row of lights that looked like yellow stars. They knew what these yellow stars meant. They were lights on the large fishing-boats which were provisioned and ready for the long journey to Lofoten, and to-night there was a gay party on each ship. Men in their jumpers and sou'-westers sat with girls on their laps. Beer and brandy went the rounds. They kissed and ate flat bannock until the syrup was smeared over their faces. It was a world by itself out there. The two boys from Dyrendal were on their way to see girls at Naust on the opposite side of the lake.

They had gone only a short distance when, suddenly, they heard a shout down the road, and before they had really had time to make up their minds what it meant, Nils shouted in reply.

They stopped. It was as if they had hurled a challenge into the darkness—against the Holy

Christmas, the wind, the frost, the stars. The heavens were so far away; they themselves so small that they were lost in the black night. They could do things that were not allowed in daylight. "Hey!" This time both shouted.

Several voices came nearer. Many feet tramped the frozen road. Then they stopped.

"Good evening! And Merry Christmas."

"Good evening!"

A match was struck, shielded by a coat as if to light a pipe in the lee of the wind; but it was no doubt done in order to see who the strangers were. They were men from Aasen, from Koya, and from Rabben. They smelt of strong drink, and were very jolly.

"Out quite late, good folks!" said Nils.

"Yes, we are out looking for a porker."

There was laughter, and the boys mingled and talked together.

John Rabben spoke up:

"We have heard that the theological student from Helvika is at Sollia, and we thought of going there and throwing him out of bed."

The profile of Hans Koya's large nose stood out against the yellow strip in the western sky. He blew his nose and grinned.

"Will you boys come along? It will be great fun to throw someone out of bed in the good old way," said Lars Aasen.

"Yes, we'll go," said Nils. They could see the girls at Naust some other time.

"But first we must sample the lunch," said someone. A bottle appeared from a coat pocket and went the rounds. There was a sound of swallowing and of smacking of lips. Then the crowd began to

move—tramp, tramp, over the frosty ground. Now and then an iron-shod heel struck sparks as it hit a stone

Knut felt like another person on this dark night, when all the lights were out at the farm-houses, and he was on an errand that meant unlocking doors and stealing in without waking anybody. He was no longer himself. Something heavy in the bottom of his being rose up, and when the others stopped to shout, he also shouted so that the hills and mountains rattled on their foundations

Knut pushed aside the thought of a tender girl across the lake. Now it was girls in a wild dance, no matter who, and especially meetings in the dark, and deeds that could not be done in the daylight

He began to sing. Another joined in the song. Soon all were singing and shouting, keeping step with the music

Olina slept so peacefully,  
Peacefully,  
She smiled so sweet and tenderly,  
Tenderly,  
Then came a chimney-sweep so fine,  
Sweep so fine,  
Of him I now shall sing a line

"Wait a minute. My throat is so dry!" said John Rabben. The bottle went the rounds again, and there was more smacking of lips. A gust of wind nearly carried off the hat of one of the merry company. As a reply they all began to shout again. By this time it was hard for them to keep on their legs in the wind

"Hush!"

A long-drawn-out howl was heard down the road

They shouted in reply. The next time the howling was heard, Lars Aasen said :

"It is Ole !"

Knut almost shuddered when he heard this name mentioned. When he was a child, the grown folks had scared him by saying : "If you do not behave we'll send for Ole." If respectable people, sleeping peacefully, heard the door kicked open in the dead of night, and the stairway leading to the attic torn out, they knew very well it was the work of Ole. If the father tried to drive him away he was beaten black and blue. In the daytime he was known simply as Ole Gjert, a well-behaved fellow, tall as a giant, who seemed to be endowed with eternal youth. He was always out running around at nights, although he was nearly fifty years old.

"Hurr !" he growled, and stopped in the darkness.

"Hurr !" replied the others, and stopped also.

Ole struck a match. When he had learned who the others were, and had had a drink, he decided to join them. He also was primed and ready for a prank at Sollia. Thirty years ago he had been there, and had helped the present master of Sollia roll down the same stairway. It would be great fun to know what sort of girls they had there now.

Then they trudged on into the darkness—into the cold winter night.

Nils, who usually was so quiet and reserved in the daylight, became more and more wild out here in the darkness. He shouted louder than any of the others, and when they passed by a house, he wanted to steal in and build a fire.

They approached the dark buildings of Sollia with light steps. They found the kitchen door. It was

locked. A match flashed. Ole found the spot inside of which he thought the latch must be. He drove his knife through the door and prised up the latch. Inside everything was still. Only the ticking of the clock was heard in the room where the master and mistress slept. They fumbled around in the kitchen. Ole found the stairway leading to the attic, exactly where it stood thirty years ago. He went first. The stairway creaked. It was as though the sleeping house growled over being disturbed. As they reached the top, a bucket of water was emptied over the heads of those nearest, which splashed and ran over their hats and down their backs. The Devil! Then the theological student had set a mouse-trap. Soon, however, they were up. The beams creaked under their heavy tread. A match flashed again. One could see a large attic with beds around the walls. Beyond the next door was, no doubt, the daughter's room. They went on, one after the other—Ole always in the lead. Another match flashed. There was the bed. It became dark again. They waited a moment.

"What do you want?" a woman's voice called.

The student, who later became a member of Parliament, kept perfectly quiet; for, what if it should leak out that he, the coming leader of the people, walked in such ways of darkness at night.

"Here, I have his feet," said Ole, chuckling. "Ah, you kick, you rascal!" Now there was excitement. Some took hold of his arms, others by the collar. Ole held his feet, and went first. They brought him through the attic with heavy steps. At the stairway the student began to kick and strike with his fists, and to use his tongue; but the next moment he was

pushed down the stairway and went tumbling into the kitchen with a tremendous crash.

"What is all this racket in the middle of the night?" called the mistress from the living-room, and pounded on the wall.

"Oh, you keep quiet, Anders, or you will get a thrashing, too," said Ole.

Now their errand here was done. The theological student had taken flight. Ole went quietly in to see the old folks, lit his pipe, sat down on the bed, and gave them a drink.

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself—to run around at night like this—an old man like you," said the mistress.

"Perhaps you remember it was pleasant enough when I used to come to see you," said Ole, scratching the bristly grey beard on his chin.

. . . . .

The next day Martha was pale and would often go to the window. Nils and Knut had not come home yet. The girls had asked for permission to go to the prayer-meeting that evening, and Kristian Haug had gone home. She and Hans had been left alone in the large house. No one felt that he or she in any sense belonged to them. No one seemed to care for their comfort. No one tried to make it pleasant for them. If Nils came home during the day, no doubt he would want to go home and see his mother to-morrow.

There was winter weather in her mind as she and Hans sat in the living-room at dusk. She seemed to have a chill. Her very soul seemed to shiver.

"I wonder what sort of man Nils will become?"

she said at last, as she dropped her knitting in her lap and looked through the window.

Hans looked up from his paper.

"Perhaps there are others who wonder about that, too," he said, smiling.

"I asked him to drive me to the prayer-meeting this evening," she continued. "But it seems that he has more important things to attend to."

"If it is merely a matter of driving you to the prayer-meeting, I suppose we can find a way."

"It was not you I asked. It was Nils."

"Oh, well, but I suppose we have all been young. He is, no doubt, out with his companions."

"I imagine there are plenty of girls who would be glad to have the heir to Dyrendal as the father of their children. There may be a little of everything in store for us."

There was silence for a time. Then Hans said:

"He is really very economical—Nils. If a cottager wishes to borrow a horse, he always objects. It will be different here when he gets control of the farm."

"It seems to me that he has taken control already," said she. "But I suppose there is someone who is putting him up to it."

Hans looked at her questioningly. She continued:

"Oh, yes, there must be some reason why she wants him to go to see her constantly. She is not the sister of my brothers for nothing."

A cold shudder seemed to run through the room in the dim light. It was as if these two feared the heir—as if they feared what might happen when the time should come.

"At any rate, he is a clever fellow and a good workman," said Hans comfortingly.

"Yes, clever enough, when he can do as he pleases," said Martha.

Jonetta had come home at last. She sat in the kitchen writing a letter when the mistress asked her to put on her wraps and go out with her.

Hans had gone to bed. The two boys had not yet come home.

Outdoors the weather was clear and cold. Over the dark hills rose the glimmering, starry vault, and straight above was a broad band of northern lights that flickered and quivered and shot out streamers to the side that resembled faint puffs of smoke.

From the lake came explosions, as the night frost caused the ice to crack from shore to shore.

"Come with me," said Martha, as she took the road leading down the hill. She wore a large woollen shawl over her head and shoulders, and took short steps as she walked over the frozen ground. She stopped a moment and looked at the western sky far away behind the fjord. Suddenly she began to laugh an icy laugh.

"Do you know what we are going to do now? We—he, he, he—we are going to steal wood."

The girl stared at her, and took a step backward. But as the mistress went on, she dared not do other than follow her. The cold of the frosty grass struck through the shoes of both and chilled them through and through.

Martha stopped to listen.

"Do you hear?"

They heard a heavy rumbling sound, mysterious and far away, as if mighty beings fought and fell and gasped far out there in the night.

"What is that?" asked Jonetta in a quivering voice.



"That is the sea," said Martha

"The sea—but that is far away, beyond the mountains"

"Yes, it is the sea We do not notice a west wind much here, but this must be a bad night for boats and ships"

"Well—but where are we going?"

"We are going to steal wood." The mistress laughed again and went on

"Good Lord!" mumbled the girl, and stared again at Martha But the authority of the mistress was so great, there was nothing for her to do but follow.

They came to the beach. As they stepped in the sand and among the pebbles, silvery flames shot up from under their feet. It was the sea-fire It remained in their footprints for a moment and burned in the darkness

Large racks of birch-wood appeared on the other side of the stone wall They belonged to a neighbour.

"Come now," said Martha, and began to take sticks of wood

The girl took the wood from Martha, but looked about as if afraid someone might be near.

The hills were hard to climb with a heavy burden of wood.

"Be careful that you do not drop any on the ground," said the mistress with a grin.

When they had reached the wood-shed she added .  
"It will be best for you not to say to anyone that I did it—he, he, he! For if you do I shall tell the world it was you Good night!"

Soon Martha lay beside her husband—yawned, and had a most innocent look.

It is a relief to sin a little when a person has a desire to do things that are a thousand times worse.

She heard a mumbling sound that came from the attic. It was Jonetta, who read prayers of repentance for the sin she had committed that night.

Martha smiled and closed her eyes.

She thought it was a sin and a shame—the way these good powers and evil powers played their game in her mind as on a battle-field. On Christmas Eve, while scripture was read at the table, and on Christmas Day in church, her heart had been so full of pure and exalted piety. The woman at the foot of the Cross in the painting above the altar—oh—oh!

But—afterward! It was as if everything at home pointed a finger at her. “You make a great ado and think about the mother of Christ,” she thought, “and you—you have not given birth even to one sinful child. The one you call your heir is not yours. It is a lie that he belongs to you. In his eyes you are only an old woman, and he puts up with you because some fine day he expects to take away from you everything you own. What are you singing hymns of praise for?”

It was as if even the Lord in heaven looked down on her and thought she was ridiculous.

To-night, in retaliation, she had tried to avenge herself by committing a sin, and pointing her finger back at heaven. But goodness!—the one was just as useless and foolish as the other.

Late at night a shout was heard from the road. Shortly afterward came the sound of footsteps on the frozen ground in the courtyard. The door-step creaked under heavy steps. What in the world! Hans woke up all at once and sat up in bed.

“What is that?” he said!

“Hush!” said Martha.

Someone was fumbling for the door-latch. Martha recognized a voice. It was the voice of Ole.

The door opened. Cold winter air rushed in. There were steps on the floor. A match flashed and faces were seen in the yellow gleam. Nils and Knut were also there.

"Let us light the lamp," said Ole. They were too drunk to realize what they were doing. They had got the desperate idea into their heads of throwing the master of Dyrendal himself out of bed.

Martha and Hans lay quietly looking at these drunken revellers. They came as if out of the night. It seemed useless to talk to them.

At last Ole succeeded in lighting the lamp.

Nils and Knut were pale. They looked anxiously toward the bed and tried to smile. They wanted to show the others they were grown up and could do as they pleased. Nils began to walk up and down the floor, and was quite a man.

"Are we going to throw you out of bed?" said Ole, and came reeling toward them.

But this light from the lamp made everything look different. It reminded them of the daytime, and they lost their courage to throw the master of Dyrendal out of his own bed.

Ole sat down on the edge of the bed, tried to be friendly, and said they must not be frightened. The boys were merely celebrating Christmas. Hans and Martha lay quietly and said nothing.

Lars Aasen had found a hymn-book and suggested a new idea.

"We ought to hold a prayer-meeting," he said.

"We must remember we are with Christian people."

"Yes, let us do that," said several.

"Let us hold a prayer-meeting," all agreed.

And so these drunken men began to play at prayer-meeting at three o'clock in the morning.

The book-shelf was ransacked. Hymn-books and spectacles were brought out. Ole sat at the head of the table. He opened a book which he said was a book of sermons for family worship, but which in reality was Jensen's school reader. He put on a pair of spectacles. He was large and ruddy, had a black moustache, and a grey, bristly beard—this dauntless ladies' man and night-reveller. Now he was about to lead a prayer-meeting at Dyrendal.

"Let us open our meeting by singing hymn number 14," he began.

"Now they are going too far. They make mockery of the word of God," whispered Hans.

"Oh, I guess the Lord has good sense and can understand a joke," Martha replied.

These men in homespun sat around the table, their faces full of pious devotion. Most of them had beards, and rings in their ears. Their clothes were still cold. Some of them wore a tassel of woollen yarn dangling from a button-hole—Christmas *boutonnieres*, received from some girl.

The hymn began. But it turned out to be only a ditty. It ran :

Oline slept so peacefully,  
Peacefully,  
She smiled so sweet and tenderly,  
Tenderly;  
Then came a chimney-sweep so fine—

Yes, yes—thought Martha. These fishermen, who soon will ride over the Lofoten sea again in snow-storm and frost, and perhaps will call to the Lord for help when they face death upon the sea some night—they seem to want to make grimaces at Him, the

Almighty One, now beforehand. But, in the last moment, they lose their courage, no matter how much they have drunk.

It would have been more jolly if they had dared

The singing ended. Ole raised his eyes above his spectacles.

"Let us hear what the Scripture says, O dearly beloved brothers and sisters in the Lord!" he said, and began to read from the book of family devotions:

"The City Mouse and the Country Mouse: Once upon a time there was a city mouse who made a visit to his relative, the country mouse——" He read the fable with his eyes full of emotion, and his voice quivering with piety.

The faces about the table were weighed down with sin and repentance. Some wiped tears out of their eyes. They made grimaces, at least to one another; perhaps, also, just a little to heaven. But they dared not do more than that—these wee little souls who would soon be out in the winter storm on the sea, perhaps facing death.

They sang another hymn with the same solemn piety, dried their eyes again, and remained sitting for a time with their faces in their hands, sobbing and sighing.

"You might like to have a cup of coffee," said Martha. She slipped on a dress and got up.

"Great Heavens!—is that the sort of woman you are!" said Ole, as he rose from his seat.

Immediately the rowdies were changed into a crowd of good fellows, who were so sorry they had caused the mistress of Dyrendal so much trouble.

When the gloomy winter morning dawned, half the floor in the living-room was covered with men who lay in a row and snored.

Some had placed a foot-rest under the head, others only a hat. Martha had spread fur coverlets over them, which covered all but their feet. There was an endless number of boots in a row along the floor, with shining heel-plates down and toes up.

The entire house slept.

It was soon after the New Year that Knut left Dyrendal, and it happened in a way that no one could have suspected beforehand.

There was a snow-storm. Knut carried in wood. He stamped his feet on the door-step so as not to bring in snow, and went through the kitchen into the living-room, where he placed the wood behind the stove. Martha and Jonetta were carding wool. Hans, who was now president of the fire insurance company, sat at the table with spectacles on his nose looking through some documents. Nils was dressed in his Sunday clothes, and was about to make a visit to his mother.

"We are getting plenty of snow," said Knut, in order to make some remark before going out again.

Nils and Hans looked at him in a strange manner. Martha was pale. No one said a word.

"Do you intend to walk or to drive?" Hans asked, turning to Nils.

"I don't think I can go," answered Nils. He stood in the centre of the room with his hands in his pockets. "Because I have lost my money."

Knut stopped. He felt sharp side glances from all in the room.

"Have—have you lost your money?" he asked.

"It is gone from my purse, and the purse was in my pants pocket in the attic." Nils was cross. His face was red with anger.

"Are you sure you haven't lost your purse?"

suggested Hans, looking over his spectacles at Knut, as if to help him.

"The purse is not lost. Twelve crowns are gone—that is all. They were there yesterday, but to-day they are not there. I don't suppose anyone believes the money has left of its own accord."

"But there have been no strangers in the house since yesterday," said Knut.

"No," said Nils, and took a couple of steps toward him. "And therefore there are not very many who could have done it."

"I suppose I have done it then," said Knut, with a smile.

"At any rate, I didn't do it." Nils's voice quivered. He could not stand still. Money, and all that was worth money at Dyrendal—these were no trifles for him.

"Well, then, I suppose I must have done it," replied Knut, and continued to smile.

"You admit it, then?" All eyes were turned toward Knut. A chill seemed to run through the room. Nils approached a few steps nearer. At last he had the upper hand in his struggle with his enemy. Now the rascal might boast of his reading, and make people smile at his smart remarks, and think he had a good head. But Nils would down him, and keep him down.

"Do you admit it?" Nils asked, and raised his fist. Nils acted as if he were the master of Dyrendal and needed no help.

It was no small thing to accuse another of being a thief so that all could hear; but now it was done, and he must not back down.

"No, if it is my last word." Knut grew pale. He began to understand that this matter was in earnest.



"Ha, ha, ha—last word! You shouldn't throw away your few pennies on books and rot and foolishness, then you wouldn't have to steal."

"Oh, you shut your mouth! I haven't taken your money."

"Be careful, or I'll——" Nils gripped Knut by the collar, and raised his foot as if to kick him. All rushed up from their chairs.

"Be careful! Be careful!" Hans put away his spectacles and came nearer.

"Oh, I don't intend to have you arrested," continued Nils. "But hand me your purse. I want back what you have stolen."

"You big fool!"

"Hand me your purse, and be quick about it!"

Knut handed his well-worn leather purse with brass clasp to Nils, who tore it open. There were only a couple of crowns, and although he searched the two chambers carefully and felt to make sure there was nothing between the leather and the lining, he could not find any more.

"Well, did you find the stolen money?" said Knut, who thought he had been vindicated. All eyes turned to Nils.

"Where do you have it, then? Let me have the key to your chest?"

It was an evil day for both Nils and Knut. Nils ransacked the chest. He searched two letters which Knut had received from a certain girl across the lake. He turned his clothes inside out. Hans paced up and down the floor, and mumbled that this went too far. He seemed to pity Knut; but the heir was angry, and Hans could not be sure who was right. The money was nowhere to be found.

Nils stood in the centre of the room again.

"Wherever the money is," he said, "one thing is certain, and that is, there is a thief in the house. And there are not many to choose between."

"Perhaps it will be best for me to pack up and leave," said Knut, looking at Hans, then at Martha.

"It will be best for you to produce the stolen money," said Nils, taking another swing around the room.

Martha was busy carding wool. She bent her head down and clenched her lips. Hans stood at the window with his spectacles in his hand, and looked from one to the other.

Knut shrugged his shoulders, and went out to split wood again. After a few moments Nils came out to him and said arrogantly :

"I only want to tell you that I do not intend to have you arrested. But you can understand, I suppose, that you will have to move away from here. It is bad enough to live in such a house, even when you don't have to live with thieves."

Knut raised his axe. "If you say that once more——"

"Oh, control yourself, you fool ! But the master and mistress have agreed that it will be best for you to pack up your belongings and leave."

"I haven't stolen anything ! " burst out Knut, and sank down on the chopping-block sobbing.

"No, of course not !" sneered Nils, and went in. If he had not had his eyes opened, the thief might have stolen everything in the house some day. And Hans was the treasurer of the fire insurance company.

Knut was alone. It began to dawn upon him that he was being driven away from Dyrendal as a thief.

And only a week before Hans had promised to endorse his note at the bank so that he might attend

the teachers' training college. Now his plans came tumbling about his head

At dusk he came into the living-room dressed in his best clothes to bid good-bye

"So you are really going to leave us now, are you?" said Martha, extending her hand to him "I want to thank you for the time you have been here. We have got on well together, you and I"

The two girls came in and shook hands with him. Their eyes were red He had been there so many years—and who knew whether he was guilty. Kristian Haug was at the mill. Hans followed him outside, and added a few dollars to his wages

"It may be the money will be found again," he said "But where are you going now?"

"That I don't know," said Knut, and bade Hans good-bye.

Nils had won again But he must run over to see his mother, and have a talk with her anyway. His whole body shivered It was too bad—he almost regretted what he had done; it was dreadfully bad The mistress looked as if she wanted to trounce him.

As the evening shadows fell on this cold winter day, Knut hurried down the hill He carried his little chest, or miniature trunk, on his shoulder and a bundle of clothes under his arm He remembered the day his grandmother accompanied him over the road the first time he went to Dyrendal. That was several years ago. Now he was driven away as a criminal Everyone would believe he was guilty It was best, therefore, to go far away to some place where no one knew him. There would be no school for him. Now he must become a Lofoten fisherman, or perhaps a shoemaker, or perhaps he must go down altogether.

He reached the ice. There were patches of snow

here and there. This was not the shortest way to his home ; but neither did he have in mind to go there. When the frozen lake lay under his feet he began to hope the ice would break. Lights appeared in the farm-houses in the yellow twilight. At Lund also there was a light. There Pauline, no doubt, went in and out and suspected nothing. But all was over. To-morrow they would hear about it at Lund. He saw no other solution than the dark waters of the sound. To-morrow, perhaps, they would find his hat. Then he would be no more.

It was only about a hundred steps to open water where the lake flows into the sound. The ice was grey. The open water was black. He might as well hurry to the open water. He had already been murdered by Nils that day at Dyrendal.

He stopped for a moment and looked in the direction of Dyrendal. The large buildings up there on the hill formed a dark mass against the horizon. It was as if the entire farm gathered into one being. It was the mistress. It was Martha herself. At that moment a window was lit up. It became her eye. She lay up there in the darkness and stared toward the yellow western sky. But what had she to do with him ?

He went on.

Only a few steps more, and the ice would break. Then the open water—then the end !

Grandmother ! He halted. Should he not, at least, tell her that he was innocent ? She would believe him.

He turned toward the shore. Now the ice did break under him. He lay in the ice-cold water up to his arm-pits. He tried to crawl up on the ice, but it broke several times before he finally succeeded. The little chest was safe on the ice. The bundle of clothes was lost. Dripping wet, he set out westward in the

direction of the little fisherman's cottage on the shore of the fjord

He knew his father was at Lofoten. There were only women and children at home.

"Jesus save us! What is the matter with you—you are so pale!" said grandmother, as he stepped in.

He slept there that night in the same bed with two of the smaller children. The next day his grandmother accompanied him a short distance on his way to the steamship wharf. He wanted to get away before the rumour had spread to the hamlet. He was running away, but he did not know whither.

He bade his grandmother good-bye out on the beach. He knew he would never see her again.

The steamer ploughed the waters of the fjord. Knut stood on the deck watching an old, bent woman who was walking on the beach. From time to time she would stop and look toward the steamer. Now she would have to meet the rumour of his crime alone. The steamer rounded a point of land. The little hamlet was blotted out, as was also the group of large houses on white foundations, nestling among the hills, which was Dyrndal. All disappeared from view.

THAT night he slept in one of the ordinary peasants' lodging-houses, in the poorer section of the town, near the wharves. He had met a couple of acquaintances from his home parish, and imagined they looked at him rather curiously. It became clear to him that he could never in the world return to his home.

To-morrow he would find some day labour or take service in order to scrape together enough for a ticket to America.

He felt cold under the soiled blankets. He was at Dyrendal again. He saw the hills and mountains and lake in a light summer haze. He read *A Happy Boy* again. He lay on his back in the meadow, and discovered that little everyday things are just as great and beautiful as what is written in the history of the world. He had tried to find the beautiful in little everyday things—a wagon, a horse, a meadow, a leaf, a girl. Now there would be other things to do. He was in a skiff on a rough sea. He would have to weather the storm or go down. No one asked whether it was beautiful.

Later in the night he felt hot. Something seemed to press him against the wall and had a grip on his throat. He tossed about in the skiff on the rough sea. A girl in a blue dress refused to go with him. She stood on the shore and made faces at him. "Thief!" she said. At last he understood it was the serving-maid at the lodging-house who stood beside his bed and tried to awaken him.

"You must get up so that we can make the bed," she said. "You must remember where you are, and that it is getting late."

"The skiff," mumbles Knut. "The skiff is leaking."

The girl called the proprietress, a matron with large hips and breasts, with her hair done up high. The two women stood and looked at this country boy with light hair, a face that was blood-red, and eyes that looked bewildered.

"I wonder if he is drunk?" said the proprietress. "Isn't it too bad—a mere child!"

"His hand is very hot," said the maid. "I think perhaps he is sick."

"Well, then I suppose we must let him stay in bed awhile longer. But this is not a hospital."

The day passed rapidly for Knut. He soared through many lands and kingdoms. He was hot one moment and cold another, and had a bad taste in his mouth. It seemed as if the ceiling tumbled about. Sailors came in and stamped in heavy hip-boots, threw one chest on top of another with a dreadful racket, smoked plug tobacco, laughed and talked with shouts and coughs. Toward evening there was a fight, and it seemed as if the house were toppling over and the walls and windows were being shaken down into a heap. When at last it became quiet in the room, steps were heard in the street. They came nearer—nearer—more—always more. They were policemen who came to arrest a boy in a lodging-house, one Knut Hamren, who had been accused of stealing. Tramp, tramp—there was no end to the number of policemen. And here lay Knut, burning hot and could not run away.

The next morning the proprietress brought him a

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plate of soup. He refused it and turned to the wall.

"He doesn't even answer when you ask him where he comes from," she said. "What in the world shall we do with the boy?"

There was the usual stir and bustle of sailors coming in and going out all day long and late into the night. When at last it had become quiet, Knut sat up in bed and stroked his forehead.

"I must get away from here," he mumbled, "or I shall lose my wits."

There was a sound of snoring from the other beds. He was weak and sweaty. He could barely stand on his legs while he put on his clothes and pulled on his boots. He succeeded in opening the door and dragging himself into the street. It was a cold and clear winter night. The moon was shining. Out there lay the town with snow on the roofs and ice on the windows. Not a sound was to be heard. "The hospital," a voice seemed to say to him. He began to walk and stagger hither and thither through the sleeping town.

The frost cracked under his feet. The snow-plough had piled the snow high along the walls. Frost crystals sparkled in the clear moonlight. Knut was cold, and perspired at the same time. Where should he go?

A shadow appeared from around a corner and stopped—a constable. He came nearer.

"Where are you going, man? Where do you live? You look as if you needed to get home. Or do you want to go with me to the police station?"

The constable thought he was drunk.

"The hospital—where is the hospital?" mumbled Knut.



"If that is where you are going—why, it is down that street there." The constable straightened up. He turned around and looked at the moonlit fjord.

Knut staggered on. The street was long. The small houses looked as if they had sunk down in the snow, and as if the grey windows looked out into the moonlit night for help. He met a number of frost-covered horses carrying harnesses fitted with silver buckles. In the sleighs were happy men and women who sang. They flitted by as if in a vision. Knut thought: "To-morrow—to-morrow you will not be alive."

It seemed as if the world were dying all about him. The town that slept, the fjord that splashed among the poles supporting the wharf, the houses with their frosty eyes, the heavens, the stars, the moon—all seemed to be dying with him that night.

Knut pulled the door-bell at the hospital. It rang inside. A long time passed, and the moon sailed through many clouds before Knut rang again. Ding-a-ling! At last steps were heard. A small door at the side of the large front door opened, creaking from the frost. The sleepy door-keeper stood there and shivered. He had merely thrown a coat over his shoulders.

"What do you want at this time of night, man?"

"I am sick. I want to be taken in here."

"Have you an order from a doctor?"

"No!"

"Are you able to pay?"

"No—yes! Does it cost a great deal to be sick in a hospital?"

"At any rate you do not seem to be so sick but that you can wait until to-morrow. And if you

cannot pay for yourself, you must have an order from the poor-master where you live."

The door was closed.

Knut turned around. He sat down upon the steps to rest. The moon looked straight into his face.

He began to wander about again—to stagger, as if drunk, through the streets. You are alone, Knut. No one cares to help you. You must stay out in the cold. You must die to-night, alone, upon some doorstep.

The door of the lodging-house had remained open since he went out.

Toward morning he staggered in, and fell over into his bed.

A month later he sat up in his bed in the same lodging-house, but in a room upstairs, to which the proprietress had taken him. She came in and told him he must remain as a servant there until he had paid for medicine, doctor, and care which she had provided for him during the time he had been there and almost died from rheumatic fever.

It took Knut six months to pay the debt. He helped the maids beat blankets and rugs. He cleaned the courtyard and carried boxes and barrels for the little household. Often he seemed to discover the great and the beautiful in little things. At any rate, he whistled and sang, especially when he was able to send a half-pound of coffee and a little brown sugar to an old grandmother in a fisherman's cottage by the fjord.

Often as he went by the barber's shop on the corner, he would stop to look at the young men in white who stood there and could pinch the nose of even the sheriff himself while they lathered his face and shaved him.

It would be pleasant to have such a big-wig by the nose and brandish a razor over his throat. So one day Knut went inside, and was accepted as an apprentice. The wages were larger than anyone could expect—four crowns a month, and board and lodging—a kind of lodging.

The time passed, and Knut had to stand day after day and lather men's chins. He was not permitted to use the razor yet. But did not Murat begin as a stable-boy, and still not become discouraged? He worked his way up until one day he became King of Naples.

Knut felt lonely and homeless among these strangers. Many an evening he stood on the wharf and looked for some familiar face from his part of the country as the steamer came in. He did not dare to go near and show himself in the light, for was he not looked upon as a thief at home?

The following winter he became a member of a trades union, where there were lectures and discussions about social injustice, and also a library. This was a great experience. But a greater experience still was in store for him when it fell to his lot to accompany the master barber to the theatre to change smooth-faced actors into kings and emperors. There were free theatre tickets. And new worlds opened to him with a form of greatness which he did not know existed.

The old greybeard who had charge of the library in the trades union hall often chatted with him, and one evening he said:

"You have been the most diligent visitor here this winter. Wouldn't you like to come behind the counter and help me evenings? There is too much to do for one man."

He was talking to a beardless youth about nineteen years old, who had a large curved nose and wore a black woollen shirt without a collar. Knut answered that he could not do that because he intended to leave soon.

"Leave—are you not learning the barber's trade?" asked the old man, and turned the gas flame a little higher.

"No, I am sorry to say—I was discharged."

"Did you cut your customers too much?" chuckled the old man.

"Oh, no; but I pinched the noses of the big-wigs too hard when I lathered them. And the master barber said I would ruin his business."

The old man smiled. "And what do you intend to do now?"

"Now I am a chimney-sweep. But soon I am going to America."

The old man looked at him over his spectacles.

"Yes, in Chicago there are very tall chimneys to sweep, if that is what you intend to do."

"I have heard that the theological school is free there," said the young man, smiling and looking rather embarrassed.

"Theological school! Well, well—it may be all right if you don't pinch people's noses too hard again," said the old man. He smiled and extended his hand.

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*God and Woman*

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*Part III*

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THE old curlew had returned. It flew high above the neighbourhood the first warm day in May. When it saw Dyrendal again, where it had built its nest for many years on the hill-side east of the many buildings, it opened its large curved beak, and sang long and merrily—"huit ! huit ! huit !"

But as the curlew came nearer it noticed there had been changes at Dyrendal. The house was no longer yellow but white, and on the hill-side, stump and stone and hillock had been cleared away. It was now a black, ploughed field. Was the curlew dreaming? Was a man harrowing exactly where its nest had been for so many years? The old curlew felt that it had been robbed of its home, and as it flew in large circles high above the field, it shouted angrily—"twee ! twee ! twee !"

It was Nils that harrowed. Nils was now a man of about twenty-two years of age. He was plump and robust and wore a small, light moustache. He was cross and drove the dark horses so hard that they were dripping with perspiration. He had taken off his hat, and his greyish-brown hair stood straight up.

"Gee up there, ponies ! Good Lord, we must finish this job some time !"

He wanted to visit his mother that evening, but he was not the sort of person who would leave his work half finished. Since Kristian Haug and Jonetta had married and become cottagers, there was only one hired man at Dyrendal, and, on that account, Nils

must work both early and late. And what did he get for all his work? The hired man received wages, but what did Nils receive? Nils—was not he to have everything after the master and mistress—was not he the heir? Yes, that is what folks said, but Martha and Hans had never breathed a word about it. He had now worked here as a full-grown man several years, but they had never said anything about wages. He was doled out a few shillings as spending money on rare occasions, but that was all. What was their real intention? Time flies—the years pass very rapidly. What if he should waste the best years of his youth here? Why didn't they say something? Did they really intend that he should have everything after they were gone—if so, why didn't they put it in writing? Many of his companions had gone to America, and had become persons of importance, while he was building here upon an uncertainty. He was neither master, son, nor hired man. Dyrendal was not his home. At the same time, he was not merely a stranger here. It was a mixed-up affair. He could not speak to the master and mistress about wages or anything of that sort. In a way he was too close to them, in another way, not close enough. They were not his employers, nor were they his parents. Of course, things might have been different; but it was too late to think of that now. They would look at him and he at them, but there was always a certain distance between them. And time—time was not standing still. "Gee-up there, ponies, we must finish this job!"

At last he stopped to let the horses get their breath. He surveyed the large piece of new land on the hill-side which had been ploughed last autumn—it must have been at least four acres. And who got the

credit? The master, of course. He is a very energetic fellow, that master of Dyrendal, folks would say. He—energetic!

No, I think it was when Nils returned from the agricultural college that things began to move around here. And Hans—yes, what can he do? He can sit in the district corporation, and run around to meetings, and read the newspapers, and sit around all day writing his name on documents for this society, and that board of directors, and that other executive committee—but you cannot break new land that way. And if he ever came out in the field he would make one jerk—then he would either sit down and smoke his pipe or go into the house again. Well—that is his affair. But then he might, at least, let Nils take charge, and not come running every little while and give orders that only meant that Nils was wrong. Of course, the thing would end in confusion! When Nils stopped to think what this farm really could be made to yield, if he only had his hands free, it made him angry through and through.

The shadows began to fall. An odour of rich soil rose from the earth. The horses were so warm that steam rose from them. “Gee-up there, we must finish this! Get up, Brownie!”

As the young man in tall boots trudged after the harrow again, thoughts that he had nourished a long time came into his mind and made the world look very black to him. What if it were true that they had tricked him into coming here, without ever intending that he should be properly paid for his work? Was it their idea to get one of their own relatives who would always work and slave for them for nothing? What if it were so?

He turned around. “Gee-up there!” The har-



row bobbed up and down over the furrows. Then came the worst thought of all, which made him outright sick. Suppose they did intend that he should have everything—when would that be? How long must he wait? They were not sixty years old yet. They might live twenty, thirty, even forty years. He might be an old man the day Dyrendal finally became his property. Was he willing to wait for that?

Then one of them might die and the other marry some young person. Then he would stand there a beggar. There was nothing in black and white to prove that he was the heir to Dyrendal.

"Get up, Brownie! Twenty years from now, you may still work here as a hired man, without having saved up a penny. Well, well—work on! You develop the farm so that it becomes larger and better each year, and perhaps a total stranger will come in and reap the reward. All you get out of it is work. Get up there, ponies!"

And after all—will there be much left when they are gone? They might spend it all, bit by bit—one shilling here, another shilling there. How much they had in the bank he did not know. And, after all, Hans was always making some trip or other, travelling first class on the steamship with the rich people, and had a fine house in town, and spent money right and left. One could easily see that he had no thought of the one who was to be his heir. He would lend money to a boy who wanted to learn telegraphy, waste money sending one of the cottagers to the hospital, and they talked of taking a trip to Kristiania—the Lord only knows how much money that would cost. No doubt they were trying to manage so that there would be as little left as possible.

And perhaps you deserve to be treated this way, Nils; for, in a way, you sold your mother in order to come here and enjoy all this splendour. "Get up, there!" He made a grimace and went on.

The lowlands became dark, but the lake became lighter. Nils worked in the blue twilight. There was a bright half-moon above the mountains toward the north. The black grouse sang. Nils walked slowly because the harrow was heavy for the horses uphill. But he was anxious to finish his work. He began to whistle, and looked at the yellow evening sky above the bluish-green mountains in the west. Then he began to hum a tune. He did not know what it was. It was as if the blue spring evening lent him its own tune to hum.

THAT simple country folk should make a long journey down to Kristiania only for pleasure and to mingle with the great was something new. That was more than either the minister or the doctor could afford.

"But you can well afford it," said Peter Eriksen to the master. "Because, only to mention what the salmon have brought you the last few years—but perhaps I shouldn't say too much about that."

"Oh well, you see we don't have a flock of children to provide for," said Hans, although Nils was present and heard what was being said.

No one consulted Nils about the journey. He was merely asked to drive them to the steamer, and their parting word was to remember to do this and that while they were away.

Those that came to the wharf saw the mistress of Dyrendal start out with a light grey raincoat that reached down to her shoes. On her head she wore a black silk kerchief, the tip of which hung down her back. Yes, she went away with that, but wait until she comes back! She could afford to have a hat with plumes. They would not be surprised if she would outshine the bailiff's wife even in that matter. She looked handsome and stately as she stepped aboard. Her hips and her breasts had become larger, and her red face began to be marked by blue veins, just like rich folks after they have been eating rich food for a long time.

They started on their journey.

No doubt it would cost a great deal. But it was true enough—they did not have a flock of children to provide for. And Nils—yes, he was a good person to have around. Gradually he had, more and more, taken charge of the farm. He was industrious, and always looked after the interests of the master and mistress. But sometimes he managed and domineered a little too much. He was not the master of Dyrendal yet—oh no, not yet, exactly. And they did not care to say more about it just now. There was no great hurry. He was not suffering from the want of anything. He could have food whenever he wanted it, and he could come and go, and attend to any little affair of his own whenever he pleased. Furthermore, they were not ready to fold their hands in their laps and quit just at that moment. They were not quite ready for that. And if they felt they could afford an outlay they did not consult anyone about it either.

They were gone about two weeks. Rumour of their home-coming had preceded them by a day, and there were a great many people at the wharf who were curious and expected to see many strange things when Martha and Hans were rowed ashore from the steamer.

But they stepped ashore wearing exactly the same clothes they wore when they went away. Still, they were not quite the same. They had another bearing. It was as if everything they looked upon made them smile good-naturedly because it was so small.

Nils did not come to the wharf to meet them. He had sent the new herd-boy with Whitey and the gig. Perhaps, Nils thought, that was good enough. Yes, yes!

People did not have the heart to begin questioning

them the moment they had stepped ashore--no doubt they had many things to think about; but when they were sitting in the gig, Olsen, the tailor, unable to contain himself any longer, shouted from a distance:

"I suppose you saw John Sverderup, did you?"

"Oh yes, we saw him also," Hans answered, smiling and snapping his whip at the horse.

If they had not been big-wigs before, they surely were now.

Martha seemed to be nearer to her husband than ever before as he sat there in his blue coat, broad-shouldered, his large beard beginning to be streaked with grey, his wide-brimmed plush hat no longer able to hide the moon on the back of his head.

They drove slowly past the farm-houses on the way. They did not want to appear as if they were putting on airs and trying to show off by driving faster than other folks.

As they came up the avenue leading to the house they had a new feeling of attachment for their home.

Hans had once more had his fill of travelling around to strange places, and it seemed good to come home again, especially as he had no scores to settle with his wife this time. And now Dyrendal did not seem to be too big and fine for them, for, in the first place, they had now seen houses which were bigger and grander, and, in the second place, they felt more important than before.

"I wonder if we shouldn't clean up the garden a bit," said Hans, "so that it doesn't grow altogether wild."

"That is exactly what I was thinking about," said Martha. "It didn't look like that when the colonel left and we first came."

When they had reached the house, Nils came in and said : " Great heavens, you must have had a grand time, and welcome back ! "

At last Hans sat in his own rocking-chair again, smoked plug tobacco in his own long-stemmed pipe, and enjoyed himself thoroughly. Cottagers and servants came in for dinner. Many questions were asked, and many things were told to each and all.

" Can you guess whom we stumbled on in Parliament ? " asked Hans, looking at Nils.

" No—was it the King himself ? " Nils sat a little aside from the rest. He acted as if he were more curious than the others.

" It was one who was a herd-boy here a few years ago. It was Knut."

There was great excitement. Knut—in Parliament ! Hadn't he gone to America ?

" He has returned. And now he is in Parliament writing down everything that is said there. What is it they call it, Martha ? "

" Reporter—no, wait a minute—stenographer," said the mistress, who was at the other end of the room unpacking.

" Yes, yes—that is the way it goes when a person has brains," said Hans, and again looked at Nils. Nils returned his look—he had had enough sneers about that affair with Knut.

" And he invited us to take dinner with him at a very fine place," continued Hans. " I think he gives lectures too, down south. But—but I am afraid he is a radical—a socialist." Hans shook his head.

He did not want anyone to think he approved of that, but youth is youth. Hadn't he himself watched his chance to spit down from the gallery in Parliament ?

There was a procession of neighbours throughout the day. Although the sacristan was a radical and was always fighting Hans, nevertheless he also came and wanted to know if they had seen John Sverderup. And before they knew it, in stepped the bailiff. Oh yes, there were a great many people drinking coffee in the large living-room that evening. As they sat there, a carriage drove up and in came a white-haired person of importance, wearing spectacles. It was none other than the divisional surgeon, himself. Think of it!

And the great man did not scorn to take coffee.

"I understand you have visited the city in which I happened to be born about sixty years ago," he said. "Tell me something about Kristiania. I have not set foot on her hallowed pavements since I was a student. Did you go to the theatre? Did you see Laura Gunderson in any play?"

Oh, no, the doctor must not expect too much. But another pleasure was in store for him. It was to hear Martha and Hans tell, in their own way, about the great city, as, for instance, about their visit to Parliament.

"Yes, yes—big men are wonderful," said Martha, and smiled to herself because she dared to speak of such things now, although the doctor was present. "There we sat in the gallery and looked down at the assembly. It is wonderful how big they were—some of them anyway. There was one—he was a Cabinet Minister—I doubt if he could squeeze through that door, he had such a big stomach. And the radicals"—she looked at the sacristan—"they talk about saving money and treating everybody alike, but they are not very saving—not when it comes to themselves, at least; because they are big

and fat—all those who sat in Parliament. And how cross they were. They stormed against one another, and wrangled and quarrelled! But there was a bench along the wall down by the door they slunk down to when they became too angry." Then Martha imitated the men who sulked, dragging her feet across the floor and sitting down heavily on the sofa.

The doctor looked at her above his glasses. "Tell me more," he said, and seemed to be very thoughtful.

Hans also took a turn around the room. He had his long-stemmed pipe in one hand and a match in the other. He was a conservative, of course, but he must tell about the time he saw John Sverderup. He stood outside of the House of Parliament—what is the name of the street, Martha?

"Carl John Street," said the mistress.

"Exactly! There he stood talking with an acquaintance, and as he stood there, the small boys began to shout hurrah! Then people began to gather and crane their necks and stare, and, confound me, if there wasn't a little fellow—an insignificant tousle-headed little brownie, who had a leather case under his arm.

"That is the Prime Minister," said the man I was talking to. There you saw John Sverderup. Then everyone in the street began to shout."

Hans stroked his beard, and to make sure they would understand, he would show them just how it happened.

"Here we stood—my friend and I—about here," he said. "And there came the old man," he continued, pointing to a chair. "He wasn't any farther from me than that chair there."

"Yes, and you took off your hat to show that her husband had ~~seen~~



"But it was funny what a tousel-head he was," added Hans, trying to light his pipe.

"He is a great man," said the sacristan.

"A great fox," said the doctor

"How many things one could see in the street," said Martha "There were women who came walking along with whips in their hands and stiff hats on their heads, just like a man, and tall boots with spurs" She thought they must be liberals, who dressed that way to show that they were broad minded.

"I guess they were the scum of society, instead," said the sacristan, lighting his pipe over the lamp.

"Oh, no, indeed, they were rich people," Martha smiled to the doctor. To-night she had courage.

"Tell more," said the doctor, continuing to look attentively at Martha over his spectacles

Nils sat in a corner and was red in the face It seemed to him they had told enough.

The next day Martha and Hans were each the centre of a group in the churchyard, and if at that time there were any important people in the parish, Martha and Hans were those people

Then one day Nils must hitch up a horse for them again They came out dressed in their best and climbed into the gig

"Where are you going now?" asked Peter Eriksen.

"Oh, we are invited to the doctor's house to-night," said the mistress, pulling the shawl about her as they drove off.

"Now they are beginning to be invited to the houses of the big people," he said, and looked after them with profound respect

But Nils smiled out of the right corner of his mouth.

"I guess the big man has some reason for it," he said.

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Peter Eriksen raised his old eyes questioningly. Nils continued :

" Well, I guess, perhaps, some of those people need someone to go their security, too."

" No, do you think so ? " said Peter Eriksen. Both of them remained standing and watched the gig as it drove off.

Time passed. Nils was thrifty and took care of everything as far as he felt that his authority permitted him. Nothing was ever said about his position at Dyrendal, or why he was there. As Martha and Hans grew older they seemed to become stricter with Nils. Perhaps they did not realize that they worried about the day which, in spite of everything they could do, was coming nearer. Then, too, perhaps they thought—"If he is to have everything some day, he might as well exert himself a little now."

They did not try to be economical. Not many who came to Dyrendal were turned away. No doubt they thought—"There will be enough left anyway."

Nils must still, year in and year out, follow plough and harrow—and curse. Many a time he felt like going away for ever, but he had rowed so far out now it was really too late to turn back. When he looked at the buildings which he had helped to rebuild, at the new land he had ploughed, at the trees he had planted after the devastation wrought by the lumber company long ago, it was as if he had laid down the best part of his life here, and he felt that he could not afford to leave it. But the master and mistress did not seem to grow any older. Nothing ever ailed them. Everything might be the same ten years—twenty years from now. And here he must build on an uncertainty. Hitch up the horse, Nils, and drive the master to the meeting of the district commissioners. And to-night, some time, you may bring

him home, and you may stand out in the snow-storm and wait until the meeting is over. And when the horse becomes lame, it is : "Have you been careless again, Nils ?" Often master and mistress made queer remarks as if they were hinting at something. They seemed to begrudge him his youth. Perhaps they did not like the idea that, some day, they would lie under the sod, while he would be alive and be the master of Dyrendal. And yet, at one time, they had wanted him to call them mother and father.

Perhaps Nils was right in not being on intimate terms with them any longer. When Hans and Martha took walks into the fields and meadows on summer evenings it seemed as if Dyrendal would belong to them for ever. They talked of all they had done here, how much they had spent to make Dyrendal constantly better and better. Nevertheless, there began to be a tone of sadness in their words as they wandered about. It was as if they felt they must soon sit down to rest. And the person who was to help them—to relieve them—was not their own youth renewed. Instead he followed on their heels and was impatient, and had his claim in his pocket. Let him wait awhile at least—there was no hurry.

"It will be much easier for the person who gets Dyrendal after us," Martha would say.

"Yes, indeed—he will not be pestered with interest and payments and all that," said Hans. A certain shyness seemed to prevent them from mentioning the name of Nils in this connexion. They seemed agreed to put the whole affair aside—there was no need of hot haste in the matter.

However, when Hans and Nils were alone together, they were often very good friends.

"Are you going to see your girl again to-night ?"

the old man would say. "Is there never going to be anything between you and the doctor's daughter?" Nils would become embarrassed, and would blush and grin.

Often Hans would go about quietly, as if taking the measure of this—son. If he had really been your own boy, Hans, he would have been a different sort. Industrious—yes! And reliable—yes! And careful with his money—good Lord! And no nonsense with women and liquor—hem, no, of course! But youth is youth. Hans himself went about with a large grey beard, but, even to-day, he felt like kicking the ceiling.

Nils—hem! His son—his own son would have played a tune for a different sort of dance at Dyrendal.

One winter Nils had pneumonia, and it was doubtful that he would get well. Many a long night Martha and Hans sat at the bedside and hadn't the courage to look at one another. They understood now what Nils meant to them. Once more it began to seem as if Dyrendal were not secure, but might begin to slide down the hill. They were old now. They dared not be left alone. Again and again Hans must hitch up the horse and drive through snow-storm and darkness to fetch the doctor.

It was not often that the mistress of Dyrendal cried, but when the doctor stood at the bedside one day and said there was now hope of his recovery, she could not bear up any longer, and began to cry.

Nils began to improve. Now there was one who was constantly near him, waiting on him. He must have the best of everything in the house. Isn't it strange—this time she did not think of herself, but only of him. She was good to him, although she knew he was all the time wishing they would send for his

real mother: That she must become used to anyway, some day. She must give up expecting that she will ever be more to Nils than the mistress of Dyrendal. Summer came at last. Hans was attending a meeting of the electors, and this time he came very near being sent to Parliament.

Hans commanded a certain respect when he rose in a gathering of people to speak. It was as if the entire country-side through him expressed its opinion.

To be sure, there were a few who remembered him from the days when his visits to town usually ended at the police station; but it was at a very solemn meeting for the nomination of candidates that he became impossible. He walked over to the very dignified district judge and roared that he would take him across his knee and give him a spanking if he did not hold his tongue.

And when he began to understand that that lost him his chance to go to Parliament, Hans experienced an old-time glorious thrill. Once more 'a herring catch went to sea—hurrah!

But Martha—he must get Martha to believe that wicked people had been busy again with poison and mean political tricks. When he stepped ashore on the little wharf at home, wearing a grey tall hat, and having a raincoat over his arm and an umbrella in his hand, he looked a good bit like a big-wig.

What could this mean? Martha herself had come to meet him.

“Now she is angry because I was not elected this time either,” he thought, when he saw how pale she was.

But when the gig reached that part of the road which leads through the woods he learned that this time there was trouble of another sort.

"Let us sell the farm, Hans," she said abruptly, and looked straight before her.

What did she say—part with Dyrendal—sell the place? He fixed his eyes upon her and pulled the reins tight.

"Yes," she continued, "because I do not want to be a dairy-maid here any longer."

He smiled. "No, that is what I have been saying, these many years. But it is not necessary that you should be dairy-maid."

"And you are certainly rich enough now so that you can live on your money. Why should you stay here and worry and have only strangers about you?"

"What about Nils then?" He chewed his beard and gave her a side glance. The word had been spoken. Now they could not put this matter aside any longer.

"Nils, yes!" she sneered. "If he has money he can buy the place as well as another."

He lowered his voice when at last he answered:

"You must not talk that way, Martha. That was not the understanding when we took the boy."

"No, of course not," she continued sneeringly. "But neither has it turned out as we expected at that time."

"Has he returned from the army?" asked Hans.

"No, indeed, he has not. He should have been home yesterday. We sat up until after midnight waiting for him. But, no doubt, he has gone to his home."

"His home—his home is here, I suppose, is it not?"

"No, his home has never been here, and it never will be, either."

"Have they started haying?" he asked after a pause.

"No, how could you expect that? There is no

master at Dyrendal. And that is the reason I think we might as well sell out and have done with it."

The mistress had, no doubt, had a bad night again while waiting for Nils and raging against her sister for constantly pulling him away from Dyrendal. In comparison with that, everything seemed of small importance, even the fact that he had failed to be elected to Parliament.

They drove past several farms where mowing machines hummed in the meadows. When they came to Dyrendal no work was being done. It was true enough—a master was needed here, and Hans himself had so many other things to attend to.

They sat up late that night waiting for Nils. Hans smoked, Martha knitted, and, now and then, one of them would go to the window.

"No, I say as I said before—we ought to sell and move away from here," said Martha.

"Oh, you don't mean that." Hans took the pipe out of his mouth and knocked out the ashes.

"Yes, indeed, I mean every word of it. In town we could live like well-to-do people, and not be for ever bothered with either servants or animals."

"And when we become old so that we cannot take care of ourselves any more——"

"Then we can pay our way into an old age home."

"Hub!" said Hans, and stretched out in the rocking-chair.

For a moment they sat there considering the matter. They saw themselves as old and infirm, in a bare room at a large public institution, a home for the aged, filled with old people who were strangers to them. And when they were no longer able to take care of themselves, they must be taken care of by people who were total strangers, and who had many



others to look after. That would be different from being the master and the mistress of Dyrendal.

"Oh no, I guess we'll stay here," said Hans, as if to settle the matter. "But we cannot go on for ever in this indefinite way. We must have an understanding with Nils."

She was not willing to yield immediately.

"Do you know what kind of a woman he will bring to Dyrendal?" she protested.

"No, I do not. But we must allow the boy to get married," said Hans smiling.

"Yes, then there will be two strangers to care for us here. That will not be much better than at an old age home."

At that moment three gigs came rattling along the road on the hill-side. In the first gig sat a tall and erect sergeant in uniform. In the two others were drunken soldiers in civilian clothes, red in the face, singing and shouting. One of them was Nils. Others shambled along beside the wheels. Now and then a bottle went the rounds. After a good drink, each in turn stood up in a grand manner and shouted an order in imitation of some officer or other at manoeuvres.

"Salute the flag!"

"Good work, Fourth Company!" Nils lisped, mimicking the Colonel.

Then they all sang, and clung to the gigs as well as they could. The sergeant, who sat in the first gig, was red-eyed, but he was trim, and he smiled.

They had been on the way a long time. They no longer remembered how long, or why.

The first rays of the sun appeared behind the mountains in the east. Bottles came out again. Nils called halt, and commanded:

"Company, fall in for refreshments—hurrah! Good work, Fourth Company!"

"Salute the sun!" someone shouted, and presented arms, using his bottle as a gun.

When Hans and Martha arose the next morning, they understood from the maids that something was wrong. Martha went out to see about it. There stood Nils in the centre of the courtyard, his hat over one ear, a stick over his shoulder, which he pretended was a gun.

"Halt," he commanded. "Who goes there! Come forward and give the watchword!"

Hans came out. He was in his shirt-sleeves. His vest was unbuttoned. When he noticed Nils, he stopped to look at him. He walked around the fellow, who stood there and imagined he was drunk. That was something worth seeing. He put his hands in his pockets and stepped aside. Then he walked around him in a circle again. How, in the Lord's name, did Nils look when he was drunk?

"Halt! Who goes there! Give the watchword—you too—you old don!" Nils was fairly steady on his legs. He looked very stern, and gesticulated with his make-believe gun.

"Take him in the house," said Martha, for she saw the girls in the kitchen window.

But first Hans must see how the heir looked when he was drunk. Had he kissed the mistress on the mouth, or put his back against the stabur and toppled it over, or taken a good-sized pig under each arm and danced around the courtyard, it would have amounted to something. That might have been called having a good time. But to stand there and drivel and beat the air with a stick—does that mean being drunk?

"Go in and go to bed," Hans said at last, and

walked over to him. Nils became strangely meek and obedient when he noticed Hans had laid his hand on the stick.

Nils slept throughout the day. When the master and mistress went to bed he was still sleeping.

"What is going on in the attic?" asked Hans, as he lay beside his wife smoking.

"Oh, that is Karen. I have told her to pack up and leave."

Hans took his pipe out of his mouth, raised himself on one elbow, and stared at his wife.

"Have you driven Karen away from Dyrendal?"

"Yes, you don't seem to notice anything, so there is no need of talking about it."

"But what has she done that is wrong?"

"You haven't noticed her sneaking around and trying to be nice to Nils? And Nils, like a fool, will perhaps marry her. I suppose you think it would be grand to have her become the mistress here, so that some day we would be compelled to beg a bit of bread from our former maid."

After some time Hans lay down again.

"This seems to me to foreshadow something dreadful," said Hans. "What ails you women?"

"This ails me, Hans, that I have thoughts for the future—for the time we have left. You have your silly politics and your newspapers and meetings. But you can see very well that other times are coming for both of us."

The following morning Nils was up before the others, very likely he had been talking with Karen outside. When he came in his face was flushed and he asked for something to drink.

Martha had not slept well and was not in a good humour.

"Haven't you had enough to drink yet, Nils?" she snarled at him, while lacing her shoes.

"I suppose we ought to begin haying to-day," Hans hastened to say, arranging his suspenders.

Nils was cross. He stood in the centre of the room with his hands in his pockets.

"It seems no one can begin anything unless I am here to take hold."

The air in the room became charged. A storm was threatening.

"You think you have a hard time here," continued Martha.

And when she noticed that Hans opened his mouth to help Nils, she rose from her chair and said for the benefit of both:

"But I think we have enough with one drunkard here. We certainly do not need two."

Hans plumped down on a chair. Nils, who was angry already, took a step toward the mistress and said:

"I am glad that it has finally slipped out. Now I want to tell you something. It was not I who forced myself upon you—and if you feel that I am a disgrace to you, Martha, that can be very easily remedied. Good-bye! I am going."

With that he started for the door. Martha could not control herself. As a parting word she said:

"Oh, I think you'll find your way back again when you have had a talk with your mother."

"Martha," said Hans, rising from his chair. "Martha, you are completely——"

"Oh, nonsense! If you agree with him, you might as well pack up and go—you too. Then we'll sell the place and divide the money. You go your way

and I'll go mine. You have never been anything but a horse trader and a scoundrel, anyway."

She walked back and forth across the floor, and clenched her fists and raged. What ailed the woman?

Steps were heard in the hallway; then the outside door slammed. Hans saw through the window that it was Nils, who went away in his Sunday clothes. It was because he stood in such awe of Martha that he did not immediately run after Nils and try to persuade him to come back.

"Well, now you have done something both of us will regret," he said, terrified.

Martha sneered.

"Stuff and nonsense! The crow never flies so far that it cannot find its way back to its feeding-ground. He is not related to my brothers for nothing."

She went to the kitchen and began to create a disturbance among the maids.

The heir of Dyrendal had gone away. The overseer had gone away. The son had gone away.

Then came evil days. Hans tried to get the haying under way. But he was not the same man in the field as formerly. Even if it was only a matter of the mowing machine—Nils was the only person who understood it and knew how to use it. Hans no longer took pleasure in manual labour. And he forgot one moment what he had ordered to be done the moment before. He could tell from the eyes of the work-people that things were going badly. He scolded and stormed, but it was of no avail. It ended by his leaving the field in disgust.

Martha and Hans would sit in the living-room for hours together without saying a word.

Nor was it an easy matter for them to sleep. They

would lie awake during the night and sigh quietly. What would now become of them ?

Martha realized that she had been impossible. But lately it was as if a new sense of the future had awakened in her. A storm may announce itself by rheumatism in the toe. Martha had a feeling in her mind—a presentiment—that other days were in store for them. They had reached the height of their prosperity.

What you have been fearing, what you have refused to see for a long time, *that* you can no longer push aside. If you have not known before that you are childless, you shall soon know it now. Nils—Nils is one life more to his own mother ; but to you and Hans he is—oh, you might as well say it right out—he is a bird of prey who follows you and watches you and waits for you to drop. To him you are worn out. You might as well admit it to yourself at last.

And you try to defend yourself before you have been completely overcome. That is foolish, perhaps. It only makes things worse. That which is to happen will happen.

Martha would wring her hands, but she was able to do no more. She was powerless. She had given up. She was tired—tired—oh, so tired that she had hardly energy enough to live.

But can't you try to have hope, Martha ! You see only the dark side of it. Nils was sometimes very kind.

Try a little to look at the bright side. After all, that is your only salvation. An old age home—the Lord preserve us from that. Nils—don't you take pride in him, after all ? And if you wish to end your days at Dyrendal, is there anyone else to whom you would rather trust yourself than Nils ?

During the following days both Hans and Martha would go to the window from time to time and look down the road, but Nils did not come.

They went about surrounded by strangers. They felt that they were getting old. Now they were responsible for the entire management of the farm, and it weighed heavily upon them. And the future—their old age: of that they knew nothing.

One day Hans said:

"You may say what you like, Martha, but to-day I intend to drive over and bring Nils back."

Martha was pale. She did not sneer. She only said quietly:

"Yes, yes—creep to the Cross."

Hans drove off. He felt that Martha agreed with him.

The mistress of Dyrendal went often to the window and looked down the road. For the third time the master of Dyrendal had gone a-begging to bring home an heir.

It was so humiliating that she felt like weeping. But she must bow to the inevitable—even if it hurt.

She sat for hours at a time on a chair in the living-room and stared straight ahead. As time passed she began to fear that Nils had gone farther away than to his mother's home. What if he had gone to America?

She became more humble. She was ready to submit to these heavy blows without a word. She remembered when Nils was sick. He lay there in his bed and thought only of another woman. Still, she had conquered herself and been kind to him, without expecting anything in return.

It was this she must teach herself to do once more. Nils would bring home a woman who had succeeded

in winning his heart, as she had not been able to win it. She must try to be kind to her also. She must try.

That will be the end, Martha. Your life contains no more. Soon it will be over. All will be over.

After a long period of waiting, Hans and Nils drove up to Dyrendal.

Martha stood stiffly behind a curtain. When Nils came in she said good day, extended her hand to him, and said :

"You are welcome back, Nils." She could say no more. She sank down on a chair and tried to smile.

Hans followed Nils into the room.

"Yes, Nils and I have agreed that he is to take charge of the farm next autumn," he said. "And if you want to have it in writing immediately, why——"

"No, no," declared Nils, becoming red with embarrassment. "There is no hurry about that. But I did want an understanding so that I might know where I stand."

"No one ever thought anything else," said Martha, drying her eyes.

"Perhaps it might be best to have an understanding about another matter," suggested Hans, looking from one to the other.

"Yes," said Nils, more embarrassed than ever. "It is this, that I—that I am sort of supposed to be engaged——"

Martha rose from her chair abruptly.

"Who is it?" she said, her eyes fixed upon him.

"She is a good girl," said Hans, making preparations to light his pipe.

"She is the daughter of the sacristan over in Vassby parish," said Nils.

"Oh—that liberal!"



"Well, that can't be helped," said Hans, striking a match. "But she is a good girl."

"And you have not told us about it," said the mistress reproachfully.

"Everything has been so uncertain," said Nils. "But I suppose we can get married soon, now."

"Yes, of course, if you are to have a farm you must have a wife," smiled Martha, constantly drying her eyes.

When Nils, after haying was over, was about to visit his sweetheart, Hans said :

"You must greet her from us and invite her to come over, so that we may meet her."

"Yes, you must surely do that," said Martha.

But though Nils went several times, he did not bring her to Dyrendal.

"It looks as if your sweetheart did not care to become acquainted with us," said the mistress.

"Well, she is so shy," replied Nils.

Martha smiled.

"I suppose she is afraid of me," she said. "But you may greet her from me and say that some folks are not quite as bad as their reputation."

Thus it happened that early in the autumn Kristian Haug travelled over the neighbourhood, with his coat over his arm and his hat in his hand, inviting folks to come to the wedding at Dyrendal. It was not for nothing that he had served the master and mistress these many years. He was also entrusted by the host and hostess to serve as master of ceremonies at the wedding, and to have charge of the refreshments.

Martha began a general house-cleaning, so that the house would be in good order when the new mistress should come. This would be the last time. She would sigh from time to time and sit down to rest. Were not these bright rooms, and this furniture she had scraped together—were not all these things her belongings? Was she compelled to give away all this now? What compelled her to do that? It was this strange thing—that her time had come. You were young yesterday, Martha, and to-day you are old. You imagined that everything was paid for, and that you owned the farm and everything upon it; but the fact is, you have been only a tenant here, and now your time is up. What you have collected is, no doubt, a part of your life, and now—yes, yes—that is the way of it—we die bit by bit—a little at a time. Now it is your turn. You and Hans are beginning to die.

Revolt arose in her mind, but she conquered it immediately. You must submit, Martha. You can-

not escape any way. As she went about her duties she prayed quietly.

"Oh God, help me to be good and kind toward her, who is now about to begin her life here after me. She is young, poor girl, and perhaps worries most about how she is going to be able to get along with me."

Grey haired and freshly starched, Martha stood beside Hans on the doorstep of Dyrendal one day when a gig and a load of household goods swung up to the house.

A young woman, pale and light haired, sat in the gig beside Nils. She smiled anxiously as the master and mistress approached to bid her welcome to Dyrendal.

When she had been helped down from the gig, she placed her hand above her eyes and looked around. This unaccustomed view over the neighbourhood in all directions was too much, coming, as it did, all at once. When she entered the house she sat down near the door like the stranger she was. It was not until she had partaken of coffee and food that she removed her kerchief and cloak and asked if there was anything she could do to help.

"Now, if you will come with me, I should like to show you the house," said Martha.

The younger woman looked at Nils as she was about to follow. Martha smiled and added:

"Oh, you don't need men folks to protect you. I don't intend to bite you."

When the women had left the room, Hans came over to Nils and said:

"That is a fine-looking girl you have captured. What is her name—Olina?"

"Yes, must I tell you once more—her name is Olina."

"Well, she may be a pretty good girl for all that," Hans continued jokingly.

"There is no doubt she will do," Nils replied, smiling.

During the following days there was a great bustle at Dyrendal in making preparations for the wedding. Even the bride went about with her sleeves rolled up from morning until night.

Martha liked her. The girl would ask advice, and showed forethought. And if she undertook to do anything, it was done both quickly and well.

"Yes, yes—it is time that the worst of the bother were taken over by someone who is younger," Martha thought.

And Hans had someone to play with again. If the young woman came running across the courtyard he would always happen to be there, and would stroke his beard and say :

"Olina—come here! Listen—you and I must have a talk together!"

The girl would hurry on, but would turn her face away and smile. If she sat down on a chair in the living-room the old man would be sure to be there too, and would try to sit on her lap. She would run away and he would run after her. Nils and Martha would smile. "Now the smallest child has found somebody to play with again," she would say.

Since the coming bride had moved to Dyrendal, Nils felt more responsible, and began to assume almost complete control of the farm. Now he was responsible for a bride too, and she, poor creature, had no one but him to turn to with her troubles. Still nothing had been put into writing by the old folks, so Nils must continue to build upon an uncertainty. However, Nils arranged to have new wainscoting put

into the little red building up in the meadow, which had formerly served as servants' quarters. When Martha and Hans noticed it, they could not help thinking: "Yes, yes—there is some reason for that. He fears, no doubt, that the old folks might want to remain in the house, and that they would be in the way of the young folks. He thinks it will be best to have some place ready for them—yes, yes!"

But nothing was said about the little red building in the meadow. Dyrendal was a part of the very life of the old folks, which they wished to cling to as long as possible, and they wanted to close their eyes to the inevitable yet awhile. There would be time enough. Wait, at least, until after the wedding.

Wait, yes! They should have known how anxious and impatient Nils was becoming. To say anything about receiving the deed—that, of course, he could never do. But was he, for example, to receive only Dyrendal, or was he to be made the legal heir to all they owned? That they had never said a word about. Everything depended upon their favour. If there should be a disagreement some day, the old folks might send away both him and his sweetheart with empty hands.

It was humiliating to have to bow, and scrape, and wait. But one thing he swore—once he was the master of Dyrendal, there should be no trouble between the old folks and the young folks. Once the reins were finally in his hands, he would do the driving. And as far as Olma was concerned, she would never dare to become the mistress of Dyrendal as long as the old woman snoopied around and looked at her fingers.

The old folks must get out.

The last Sunday before the wedding came with

blue September sky and warm weather. The yellow fields swayed in the gentle east wind and looked like sunshine turned into grain. Martha and the young woman were out in the meadows looking at the cattle, which were grazing in the green fields. There were now forty head of red, white, and mottled cows. Some had brown bodies and white heads. Horns with bright brass knobs bobbed up and down, as the cows nibbled the grass. Down beside the lake there were two white heifers that had eaten their fill and lay stretched out on the grass chewing their cud with their eyes closed.

When their old mistress came by many of the cows raised their heads and lowed. Martha talked to them and patted them and called them by name. There was a light haze over the landscape. The lake and the fjord looked silvery. The mountain-tops were streaked with yellow. The church bells rang.

The visit to the animals in the meadow became a strange experience for Martha. It seemed to her as if they were there to bid them good-bye. She remembered the winter evenings when she used to sit beside them to milk, and placed her forehead against their warm sides, how the movements and the noises in the large stable would stream into her and fill her with a spirit of infinite calm and serenity. Their peace would become her peace. She gave them what they needed to sustain life, and in return they gave her peace of mind and the joy of caring for them. Now it was a thing of the past. All this had only been loaned to her. Now it must be given back. And, at her side, walked the person who was to relieve her and take her place.

Martha felt, for the first time, that she must like

this girl. She was not exactly her daughter-in-law, but nevertheless—she must give over a great portion of her life into her hands. Here it is. Take good care of it. She did not say, in so many words, that the young woman should have all of these animals—no, not to-day, but she selected a cow here and there and talked about her. That, for instance, is such a cow, and must be taken care of thus, if she is to give milk as she ought to. The young woman was very attentive. She walked beside Martha and smiled, and her eyes were submissive.

The wedding day was bright and warm. Flags fluttered in the light breeze. The farmyard was full of teams. Horses neighed. Dyrendal teemed with kerchiefs and shawls and men's coats of grey homespun and blue duffel. More teams were coming constantly. There were hundreds of guests. A wedding at Dyrendal was no mere trifle. The bride's father, the sacristan from Vassby parish, was a tall man with a dark beard. He came without his wife, but with six children, and had invited twenty of his neighbours. "I wonder if they are all liberals," thought Hans.

Just before they were going to church for the wedding ceremony, the old man stood before the mirror in the front room arranging his neck-tie. Martha, grey-haired but spruced up and beautiful still, came to him rather hurriedly.

"And now," she said, "I want to thank you for everything, Hans."

He turned around and smiled an uncertain sort of smile.

"What everything is that?" he said.

"Oh," she said, her arm brushing his sleeve as if by accident. "It is only this—that we are, perhaps,

over the worst of our struggles now." She smiled and hastened away.

The bridegroom walked about restlessly, dressed in blue duffel and stiff hat. His necktie would creep up too high in the neck, so that he had constantly to push it down with his forefinger. While doing this he would stretch his neck and make grimaces. There were a thousand and one things that needed his attention. He must arrange the bridal procession in order of rank and kinship with the bridal pair. He must arrange the seating in the church, where all wished to occupy places of honour, as near the front as possible. He knew that, for years afterwards, people would talk about this one and that one who had been placed too far back.

Martha also bustled about with an anxious look. Would Nils's mother follow immediately after the bridal carriage, or would it be she and Hans?

The carriages began to roll up. And there was the Surrey, which had been used by the colonel, the former master of Dyrendal, and which Hans and Martha had always looked upon as a little too fine for them. It had been pressed into service for the occasion to carry the bridal couple. And there was the bride on the door-step. All eyes were fixed upon her. She was tall and pale, but very beautiful. Her golden hair was bound with a garland of flowers. She stepped into the Surrey. The bridegroom stepped up beside her. A bridesmaid occupied the front seat with the driver. The whip snapped. The bay mare to-day had silver buckles on her harness. She curved her head and seemed to know that she had been entrusted to carry a bridal pair to church.

What was this? Carriage after carriage came up and rolled away. Next after the bride and groom



were the sacristan, and by his side Nils's mother. But Martha and Hans seemed to have been forgotten. They looked about for a conveyance. Was there none for them ?

"What about us ?" said Martha to Hans. She was pale. Hans was also very much perplexed. Nils had charge of finding places for the visitors to ride, and there were many to provide for. But—but they wanted to ride, too.

Hans ran up the road and called to Nils. The bridegroom had worked so hard to arrange everything. He thought at last he was through.

"What is it now ?" he said angrily, and stopped.

"You must have forgotten that Martha and I should also like to ride to the church."

"Great heavens !" exclaimed the bride, looking at the bridegroom in a terrified manner.

Nils also realized that this was a dreadful misfortune, and that it was his fault, but that seemed to anger him the more.

"Oh, you take this Surrey," and he made a movement as if to get out. "The bride and I can walk."

"You ought to be ashamed of yourself to talk such nonsense. But didn't you bring down a horse from the pasture for me ?" Hans stood beside the road and spoke in a low tone of voice, so that others would not hear.

"If you wanted another horse, couldn't you have looked after that yourself ?" said Nils, and drove on. Now the whole wedding had been ruined.

Martha had heard everything where she was standing on the door-step. She groaned when Hans returned.

"We are left over," she said. "We might as well stay where we are. Come, let us go in."

"No, that would wreck the wedding. We'll get

a ride with someone." The wedding guests had been so busy taking their places in the long procession that no one had noticed this little hitch. At last Martha and Hans were invited to ride with the bailiff.

Flags had been raised at every house that the wedding procession passed. Only the very oldest could remember so large a wedding. In former times a wedding procession of this sort would have been very different. First would have come the musicians—clarinet and fiddle—then the bride wearing a crown. The horses would raise clouds of dust. And the men would pass around a bottle and would sing. Now, the long line of horses jogged along at a dog-trot, without any noise, almost as at a funeral.

The bride's father and the bridegroom's mother had many things to talk about as they drove immediately behind the bride and groom. The old woman was shrunken and crooked, and had constantly to dry her eyes. Many a time it had made her feel bad to think how little desire the boy had to remain with his relatives. But, whenever he had sought refuge at home with her, she had treated him harshly and actually had compelled him to go back. It was almost as if she had driven him away from home—all for the sake of what he would inherit—and many a time it had given her pain. And he had been so kind to her—kinder than any of the other children.

When they had reached the church the bride gathered her shawl about her and came to Martha and Hans.

"I want to say for Nils," she began, on the point of bursting into tears, "that you two are to walk immediately after the bridal couple when we make the offering."

That made amends. Now they were, after all, to occupy the place of parents. The bride, poor girl,

had tried so hard to set things right, and Martha was not a person who would bear a grudge long on a day like this.

"I want to thank you for that," Martha said. She had a strong desire to pat her cheek.

The wedding lasted several days. It was necessary to set tables in three rooms. Many things were done according to ancient custom, and some things were new. For instance, it was according to ancient custom that large bowls of soup and cream porridge were placed upon the table and home-brewed ale was served. But it was something new that, at so large a wedding, there was not a drop of brandy to be had. And there was not a sound from a fiddle, because this was a godly house. Instead of indulging in such worldly things, the guests ate the oftener. They ate from morning until night. There would be a warm meal and, a little later, coffee. They would go outside and look at the weather, perhaps take a turn around the garden, then they would go in again for a cup of coffee. They drank coffee in the evening and late into the night in order to keep awake. If any of them happened to wake up too early, they would drink a cup of coffee in order to get straightened out. Many acquired a bad taste in the mouth and felt as if they had a weight in the stomach. Folks told them they would feel better after a good cup of coffee. The young folks dared not dance. Instead they played games in the meadow, and wandered off by couples into the woods.

Hans was not particularly enthusiastic over the sacristan. He went about with a look as if he, single handed, had given Norway her freedom. He gave the young people good advice, enough to last them a hundred years. But why did Nils and he

constantly have their heads together? Was it because Nils did not owe him anything, and, therefore, felt like a free man in his presence?

The days were bright with sunshine. Men in white shirt-sleeves wandered about among the buildings trying to make the time pass. Women ran between the kitchen and the stabur. Others sat upon the steps and chatted about children and cows. In the evening, after dark, neighbours who had not been invited would come to look at the gay house where there was such a large wedding.

They sat in the front room—the host, the bride's father, and the best men in the community—and talked politics and smoked, when the bailiff said:

"Let me see, was it here that Knut Hamren worked as a herd-boy once upon a time?"

The bridegroom became red about his forehead.

"Yes, indeed, it was here," said Hans. "He has become quite a man, that boy."

"You don't mean the agitator, who is travelling up and down the country, trying to start a revolution, do you?" asked the sacristan from Vassby parish.

"Oh, I don't think he is quite as bad as that," said Hans with a grin. "He was a good boy when he was with us."

Nils smiled at this.

"Yes, he has just been made editor of the socialist paper in town," said the bailiff, "so I suppose he will be out to start a revolution among us one of these days."

"I should think he would be ashamed to show himself here," thought the bridegroom, "for we know him too well."

The door was opened and someone shouted:

"Ole is here!"

" Ole ? "

Anxiety began to spread among the guests. Men and women ran among the buildings. Ole was there ! He had not been invited. He was only an unattached man about sixty years old, but still he was Ole. Breaking in upon the long monotony, the mention of this name had the effect of an explosion.

The big man appeared from the woods and walked across the green meadow toward the house. He was still tall, and had a white beard and a red face. His hands were buried in his pockets. He walked quietly. He had expected it would be just like that—a great number of people staring at him—just like that. What did he want ? Well——

When a man like Ole hears there is to be a wedding, he does not consider first of all whether he is invited. No, Ole had been in Finmark several years. He had just returned. He had heard there was a wedding in progress at Dyrendal—that he must see. He took a few good drinks—and here he was. In the good old days a wedding meant a good time—three barrels of brandy, dancing, a stabbing affray, the elopement of some swain and maid. There a man would go if he thought he might meet the fellow with whom he had a score to settle—a disagreement over timber-cutting in the woods, or a word that had been let fall ten years ago on the way to church. There old scores could be settled. If the men were too old to fight they would sit with a bottle between them, and thunder and pound the table with their fists. They would look very angry and would fight with their tongues until they were so drunk they would go to sleep on the benches where they sat. That was in the days when Ole was young. That was a wedding in former times.

Ole is here. Where is the master of ceremonies with bottle and glass? Where are the musicians? Where are the men who have been fighting and now wear a bandage over one eye? There, on the door-step a man calls for attention. He is the schoolmaster, Hansen, who wants to read from a book the adventures of Asbjørnsen. But there are no fiddles. Was this supposed to be a wedding?

Ole made his way through the crowd into the house. There sat men, not with bottle and glass, but with cigars in their mouths. To be sure they pounded the tables with their fists and thundered, but their wrangling was only about liberals and conservatives. Ole turned to go out again. No, thanks! He wanted no coffee and no cakes with syrup. What would he do with that? But the young people—where were the swains and the maidens at this wedding? There were, of course, atties and lofts. Ole walked up the stairway to the attic with a heavy tread. At a wedding ten years ago they might have been found up there.

But no young folks were to be found in the attic. They had gone to the woods. Was this supposed to be a wedding?

Schoolmaster Hansen stood upon the door-step reading a new adventure of Asbjørnsen, when the attention of his audience began to be attracted in another direction. There came Ole across the courtyard. He had got hold of an enormous bowl of cream porridge. He sat down on the steps and began to eat, not with a silver spoon, but with a ladle.

Folks stared at him and snickered. Girls who had lived in town a month as servants and wore city clothes, even to hats, thought Ole was rude. When the bowl was empty Ole put it down, went straight

to the mistress of Dyrendal, put his arm around her waist, sat her down upon his lap, and gave her a kiss square on the mouth. Some became so frightened that they ran away. But Martha did not strike him in the face—no, indeed—she laughed heartily and slapped her knee.

Then Ole rose and looked over the company :

"I thought there was a wedding here," he said, "but I see it is a funeral feast. Good-bye, and thank you !"

Then Ole went away.

Martha looked at Ole, wiped her mouth, and smiled.

"Russian !" exclaimed schoolmaster Hansen. Nevertheless, the entire audience followed after Ole.

Finally came the last day of the wedding, when the wedding gifts were to be placed in the bowl. Everyone revived. It was as if a breath of air from olden times had swept over the company. Everyone was on hand and wanted to be near the centre of action. All, of course, could not crowd into the front room. Many hung in the open windows. Behind them others stood upon benches and barrels in order to get as good a view as possible.

Kristian Haug was an important person when he asked the bride and groom to occupy the seat of honour so that folks might say a word to them.

There sat the twenty-year old bride, a little blue under the eyes on account of the long wedding, but with a garland still around her head. Nils, sitting at her side, dressed in his suit of blue duffel, pressed his neck-tie down in the neck, and realized that now the great thing would happen—now, at last. But no one suspected that, inwardly, he shivered and shook.

Kristian Haug had a gavel in his hand. He was

now a man of about forty, with a dark beard under his chin. His wife, Jonetta, was at home, with four little ones.

He struck a beam under the ceiling with his gavel and said :

“ With your permission, good folks ! ”

“ Here we have an estimable person, the father of the bride, the church sacristan, Ole Pedersen Silness, who bestows upon the bridal pair one cow and forty crowns in money. He deserves our thanks, and a drink he shall have.”

This rule was from olden times, when the giver always received a drink. Instead, Kristian handed the sacristan a bun with some syrup on it.

The bride smiled and dried her eyes. Nils rose and shook hands with the sacristan and thanked him for the gift. Hans, broad shouldered and bald headed, who sat beside Martha over by the wall, whispered to her :

“ I wonder if that dirty sacristan thinks we are in need of a cow at Dyrendal ! ”

When the bride and groom were seated again, Kristian once more struck the beam with his gavel. This time it was the mother of Nils who gave four silver spoons and three sheep.

“ We thank her very much, and a drink she shall have,” said Kristian.

Martha smiled. Did her sister think there were no spoons at Dyrendal ?

All were anxiously waiting to hear what the next would be — what the master and mistress of Dyrendal intended to give. Even the bridegroom was not altogether free from interest in that.

The gavel struck the beam again.

“ With your permission, good folks ! ”



The estimable persons this time were Hans Johnson Dyrendal and his wife Martha, Peter's daughter, of the same place. They honour the bridal couple with the gift of the entire estate of Dyrendal, grounds, houses, salmon-fishery, and woods, with the provision that they, the donors, are to have a home at Dyrendal for life, free house and food, three cows, three sheep, and their keep.

It became very quiet in the house for a moment. Here, at last, was a gift that amounted to something. Hans looked at the sacristan. That prophet of liberalism became red about the forehead. His cow became only as dust and thin air beside this.

Martha and Hans smiled when the bride and groom came to thank them for it.

"I hope you will enjoy it," said Martha, and shook the bride's hand.

For some time the others who had gifts to make were ashamed to announce them. What would their small gifts amount to after what had happened?

All eyes were upon Hans and Martha, who now no longer owned Dyrendal.

At last Kristian Haug struck the beam with his gavel again, but no one listened to him. The windows were empty. The people had scattered into groups to talk. Finally, they had mustered courage enough to begin to make their offerings again. There was a large bowl before the bridal couple. In it money began to be heaped up.

Once when the gavel struck the beam it was announced that the herd-boy at Dyrendal gave the bride and groom six brooms which he had made while tending the cattle. The bride and groom rose and came to thank him. His face was crimson, because he had nothing else to give them.

"That was very kind of you," said the bride, and gave the boy a motherly look.

A little girl who was the daughter of one of the cottagers came forward and whispered something to the master of ceremonies.

He whispered back that, no, it was not proper to announce anything of that sort. She had only brought a large bucket of cream.

The guests began to go home. At last only the mother of Nils and the sacristan from Vassby parish remained.

"No doubt those two will rule and decide what is to be done at Dyrendal after this day," thought Martha.

At dusk they all sat in the living-room and Nils walked back and forth.

"Yes," he said, "it will seem good to get into one's working clothes again."

"I suppose you are tired of having company in the house," said the sacristan with a grin. "Young folks are always anxious to be alone."

"Oh, we haven't moved in yet," said Nils. And that was true enough, for they had slept in the room above the stabur because the house was full of guests.

"Do you hear? He wants us to get out," said Martha, smiling to Hans. "Well—the house does not belong to us any longer, so I suppose we might as well take our bed and *move out*."

For a moment there was perfect quiet. Martha understood that Nils and his mother had talked over this matter together, perhaps also the sacristan.

No doubt they were all afraid the old folks would remain in the house.

"Oh, Nils didn't mean that I am sure," ventured the young wife; but the bridegroom continued to pace up and down the floor and said nothing. It was clear that he was impatient to become master in his own house.

Martha rose.

"Yes, come, Hans! Let us take our bed and move away from here," she said.

"Well—I suppose we can do that," thought Hans, and rose also.

"The servants' house isn't ready yet, so there is no special hurry to-night," said Nils at last.

But this invitation to remain was worse than none.

"Oh, I guess it is good enough for us," said Martha, becoming more and more angry. "Come, Hans, and help me."

It was no use to make objections. Martha did not want to be in the way. Martha would move out that instant even if she must sleep in the stable or in the smithy that night. She selected the bed in the spare bedroom off the living-room. One of the maids helped her take the bed apart and carry it out. They came for the bed-clothes later. Martha went to the barn for some fresh straw to use as bedding.

"I suppose the straw belongs to us yet," she said and smiled.

Hans must clean out the little servants' house. There were empty barrels and shavings and rubbish, and two fur robes hung there. Some of the window-panes were broken and the holes stuffed with rags.

"There is no use trying to reason with them," said Nils to his guests, trying to smile and still pacing up and down the floor. "If they make up their minds to do anything, why——. In God's name, let them do as they please, and be quick about it!"

When the bed had been set up in the little house, Martha straightened up and looked about her.

"Well—so far, so good," she said. "But we cannot eat on the floor. And I suppose we ought to be entitled to a chair, even if we are old. And if we are going to do any cooking we must have something in the kitchen too. And food—I suppose the food belongs to us, at least what is here now."

"Yes, but this is going a little too far," thought

Hans "We cannot take away from them what is in the house"

"We have not given them any of the furniture," she said "Come, let us carry up what we need. The sacristan, who has so many cows to give away, I suppose can give them some furniture, too."

Martha went into the front room, took down the hanging-lamp, and walked through the living-room with it. She felt that eyes were fixed upon her; but paid no attention to it.

"We must have at least light enough so that we can see to eat, we old folks," she said, and went out.

"Yes, I suppose that was not included in the furniture," said the sacristan when she had gone.

Nils tried to smile.

"I wonder if anyone knows what was included," he said. "Nothing has been put into writing yet, you know"

"True, you ought to arrange to have that done," said the sacristan, with a sly look in his eye.

By her talking, Martha had finally succeeded in arousing a feeling of resentment in Hans, so that he was willing to help her. In the darkness they carried tables, chairs, and benches out of the large house up to the little red servants' house in the meadow. One of the maids came in from the kitchen

"Well, now we have no coffee-grinder," she said

"How is that?" asked Nils, stopping in the middle of the room

"Martha has just carried it off," answered the maid. All looked at one another in amazement.

"Then I suppose we'll have to grind our coffee with an empty bottle for a while," said Nils, continuing to pace the floor

The old people did not care to go down to supper. Martha brought up a basket of bread, butter, cheese, and eggs from the buttery. They had not given away the food in the house yet.

At last Martha and Hans went to bed in their little cottage. They were tired out after this day of many troubles and cares, but they could not go to sleep for a long time. It seemed so strange that they should be compelled to move out of their own house and should be lying here.

It seemed so strange.

During the day that followed Nils saw one thing after another move over the meadow up to the little red servants' house.

He clenched his teeth. It seemed as if Hans and Martha were downright plundering him.

"We need to know what time it is, we too," said Martha as she went through the large living-room. With that she carried off the large wall clock in the tall mahogany case that reached from the floor to the ceiling.

Nils became sick at heart. He asked the sacristan to remain a few days in case he might be needed. And his mother, too, was not to go home yet.

If Nils had only been able to understand that it was exactly those two who angered the old folks in the servants' house. These strangers were invited to remain, whereas Martha and Hans must be driven out.

They kept house in the little cottage on a small scale very much as they did when they first started out in life together. Martha had soon scrubbed thoroughly in the little house, so that everything was white and shining.

The first Sunday morning they slept until quite

late Martha had figured out that if the young people had any sense of shame, if they had the least speck of gratitude, if they had the slightest idea that the young folks and the old folks ought to try to get along well together, the young wife would serve them coffee in bed, and Nils would invite them to ride to church in the Surrey.

They lay in bed for some time, waiting. Finally Hans himself had to get up and cook the coffee.

It did not occur to them that young people who are newly married like to sleep late Sunday mornings, and have little thought for anything but themselves. However, when Olina rose from her bed she did say.

"To-day it seems to me you ought to drive the old folks to church, Nils. We must try to avoid trouble and be on good terms with them."

Nils still lay in bed. He answered

"Mother wants to go to church, and your father. And I suppose you and I ought to go, also. If Hans and Martha want to go to church, I suppose they can take the trouble of letting us know that they want a horse."

On this Sunday morning Hans and Martha were heavy hearted as they ate breakfast together. They began to realize that now they were alone. They had passed the summit of their prosperity and were on the decline. They were becoming very ordinary people again. As they were no longer the master and mistress of Dyrendal, no one would take any particular interest in them any more.

They saw through the window that the Surrey and two gigs were made ready. The newly married couple, the sacristan, and the mother of Nils, a maid, and a hired man drove off to church. No one seemed

to think of the old folks. Or perhaps Nils wanted them to beg for a ride to church.

"I suppose he is angry because he did not get every scrap, down to the shirt on my back," said Hans, grinning.

To-day it seemed strange to go about among the houses and not have any authority. Dyrendal—it did not belong to him any longer.

When he went in, he found Martha sitting beside a window reading the hymn-book. She looked up over her spectacles at him.

"Do the horses he is driving to church with belong to Nils?" she asked, raising her eyebrows.

"I suppose that depends upon us," Hans replied. "Nothing has yet been decided about that."

"Yes," she said, "perhaps you are beginning to realize, you also, that it will be well for us to be careful. The day might come when the few shillings we have left will be the only comfort we have."

Hans understood that, and scratched his chin. "It is beginning to be pretty bad," he said, and shook his head.

"Yes, but is that our fault?"

When Nils returned from church he missed the large mirror in the front room.

"There have been visitors here," he said, his face becoming red with anger. He opened the cupboard door. The silver-ware was missing.

That afternoon he asked the sacristan to accompany him, and went up to see the old folks. When they were seated, he said he would like to know how much belonged to him at Dyrendal.

"Must you know that now, without a moment's delay?" said Hans with a smile, although it made him angry to see the sacristan. What the devil did



that fellow want here, anyway? He had nothing to do with this matter.

"It may be that I shall be compelled to go out and buy a few things that I need," said Nils. His voice quivered.

Hans put tufts of his beard into his mouth and looked down. Something of the slyness of the horse-trader came into his face.

"I suppose there is a little of everything you can buy here," he said at last, "when we have the auction."

Nils gave a start.

"The auction?"

"Yes!" Hans was very much amused. He made a side glance at the sacristan. "There is too much to sell off a little at the time—cattle, horses, tools, and furniture. There is also considerable grain in the stabur. I think the best plan will be to have an auction. Then everything can be settled up at once."

"It is a good thing I found that out," said Nils in a tone of voice as if he were now a ruined man. He rose. "And now I suppose I shall have to borrow a horse, a wagon, and a cow until I have had time to buy others. And I suppose I must ask permission to sit on the chairs in the house."

"We can talk about that when persons not concerned in this matter go away," said Hans, coming nearer. He looked as if he had a strong desire to pick up the sacristan and throw him out.

"Before we leave, there is one thing more I should like to know," said Nils, when the person not concerned was outside the door. "Must we begin to-morrow to buy the food we eat, although the stabur is full?"

Hans walked past him and closed the door, shutting out the sacristan.

"Nils," he said, on the point of weeping, "I think you and I can agree about these matters; but don't bring in outsiders."

Nils made a fool of himself again by not being able to control himself. He said:

"Oh, I think the man outside is just as close to me as you are."

"Well—all right—if that is the case, then let him provide you with what you need," and pushed him out through the door.

That meant bad feeling between Nils and Hans, and matters did not become better when the sacristan came as a witness the day they drove to the bailiff to make a transfer of the deed.

When they were in the office of the bailiff, however, Hans thought of Nils as a son, and remembered that they had often been good friends. He, therefore, included in his gift two horses, ten cows, and food for all until the end of the year, also all of the farm wagons and tools.

Nevertheless, there was a large auction at Dyrendal, which lasted many days. Martha was pale, but smiled. Hans was paler, but seemed to be in a merry mood, and was constantly joking. Nils rushed about hither and thither, and looked as if he were hunting for someone to thrash.

Beds, treasure-chest, mirror, sofas were put up for sale. It was a house, a home, which was being torn to pieces and scattered to the winds. One cow after the other was led up. Martha stood near by and patted them and called them by name, but she tightened her lips as if to swallow her emotion.

When the old bay mare was led up, Martha took

her by the bridle and gave her into the hands of Kristian Haug

"You have driven her so many times," she said.  
"Now I want you to give her an honest bullet."

Then she went up to her little red house in the meadow and shut herself in.

KNUT wanted to see the haunts of his childhood again, and many years ago he decided that on that day he must wear a white vest.

He was not a child any longer—oh, no, he had had experiences of various kinds out in the great world, and now his name was both famous and hated. But the childhood home was something apart. It was an illusion through which he once more wished to try to see the world with the eyes of childhood. "Down with the throne and the altar," he had hurled forth many a time. But at home he, himself, wanted to go to church.

One bright summer morning he stepped ashore. He wore a brown suit, tan shoes, and a straw hat. His vest was white. His brown beard and a wrinkle or two made him look quite different from what he did when he went away. Nevertheless, there was an old man who recognized him and raised his hat.

"Good day," he said. "Isn't this Knut?"

With an umbrella in one hand and a carpet bag in the other, he set out along the shore of the fjord. As he walked, he would stop to breathe in the fresh air. He remembered it—the odour of sea-weed and of sand moistened by the sea, of shrubs from the beach, and of new-mown hay from the fields. He filled his lungs. Occasionally he had, perhaps, experienced something similar out in the great world, but never anything exactly the same—oh, no!

He sees the mountains, the fjord, the fisherman's

cottages. Everything is the same as when he was a boy. But the people he meets have become so different. One man is unravelling a fishing-net in a boat. He is a big, heavy fellow with a full beard. He is the father of a family. Is he really one of Knut's former schoolmates? He remembers a little friend of his childhood who had the face and the eyes of an angel. Now she is this stout woman beating a fur rug, and is surrounded by a flock of children. People are so strange. They change so much.

There is the little cottage which was his home. It is still more weather-beaten than in former days. The north-west wind has, no doubt, howled its lament around its walls many a night. But grandmother is still alive. She is nearly eighty-five years old. Perhaps it is the speckled hen that keeps her alive, or perhaps it is the shilling that comes by mail from a good friend once in a while. His brothers and sisters are scattered to all parts of the world. Most of them he has not been able to help much—oh, no, not much.

He enters. His father, his beard now grey, is mending shoes. The father rises when he sees a gentleman before him.

"Well, but—well, well—great heavens!"

The stepmother has become grey. The room is full of half-grown children whom Knut does not recognize.

The door to the bedroom opens. There stands a sibyl with her staff. Her face is sunken, her skin is wrinkled, and her eyes are dim. But, of course, it is some time since last they met.

"Good day, grandmother!"

Peace and contentment—to sit in the house and wrap oneself in the thought of being at home, as one wraps oneself in a shawl—impossible! The same

night he must row out upon the fjord to fish for coal-fish. He has scores to settle with the impressions of his childhood. Once he had positively disliked the little cottage, the naked mountains, the father who had married a second time, the fjord. The years had brought a change. He had forgiven all long ago.

His father sat on the seat toward the bow and rested his oars. The long, swaying fishing-rods hung far out over the stern. The fishing-lines slanted toward the water and sailed along behind the boat. The fjord was smooth as a mirror, but, here and there, a gentle breeze breathed upon the water, producing ripples. A light, bluish twilight spread over the cottages along the beach to the east. Windows reflected the light from the western sky. Between the bluish-green mountains toward the ocean the surface of the fjord was golden. Everything was the same as in former days. Only the people had changed.

Ho—there the end of a fishing-rod bends under quick jerks. At the same time a grey seagull flaps his wings directly overhead. A yellow-bellied coal-fish comes to the surface and is dragged toward the boat. The fishing-rod bends under the strain, but finally the fish is landed safely in the boat. Another fishing-rod begins to be jerked down—then a third. Coal-fish splash the surface of the water in all directions, and now there is a swarm of seagulls in the air, that shriek and dart down; but the fishes are too large. The birds only flap their wings on the surface of the water, then rise again and shriek: "Hao! Hao!"

"Now it is necessary to be quick," said the father, with a grin of satisfaction.

The old fisherman had become humpbacked. But it is not everyone that has a son who has become an

ordained minister in America. And Knut is like a child again. He does not tell his father that, in America, a person can be a chimney-sweep in the day-time and attend a divinity school in the evening; and that a person can receive even better training in the trades unions. That he does not tell, because he would not be held in the same respect.

The father never reads a paper, and believes, no doubt, that his son, in his own community, is a sort of minister. And is he not? Certainly—of course! That is exactly what Knut is now.

The next morning he felt lazy, and was still in bed in the open attic when his aged grandmother tottered in on her poor legs with some coffee on a tray and some heather in a glass. Yes, yes—such a waiting woman is, at any rate, no child.

But afterwards there was more trouble. There were so many memories—so many things to be seen again and to be asked for forgiveness, because he had not cared for them before. He walked over the meadows, where, as a little boy, he, together with other boys, had driven the sheep home. So—the old pine-tree stands there still; and it has not become much larger. But, after all, how could it be expected to grow—the soil was but a thin crust, and the storms were everlasting! Dear friend—that is what it means to be born in poverty. You and I know by experience what it means. All we can do is to try to make life a little easier for others.

Down below are the cottages—they have become so small. And the fjord has become so wide. And here he sits. Well, well—are you sitting here at last?

Knut, the mighty one? Well, well—and yet! "Proletarians in every land, unite!" said the master—a world idea! Cyrus, Alexander, Cæsar, Napoleon

—they had a similar idea : every will on earth under one idea—the *internationale*—a commonwealth of the world ! And to be ruled by whom—yes, by whom ? Naturally, by an idea—which places a great responsibility upon me : for I am the truth—or at least one of its Generals. You become, in one age, a prophet ; in another, a General ; in a third, a priest—that is a revolutionary speaker—that is what you are in our day. You are the same person. The storm is in your soul, and who is there can hold it back ? The Cavalry General, Murat, swings his sword over his head : Hey, there, my dragoons, now the battle begins—*chargez !* The revolutionary speaker does exactly the same thing. He has the same joy of battle. He is the same person. *Chargez !*

And now you are sitting here. Now you are about to make the rounds of the places which have been held sacred in your memory. But will they seem the same as they did once long ago through the eyes of the small boy ? Hasn't there come to be too much of the printing-press in your soul ?

He had decided to visit Dyrendal the following day. But do not remind him that once upon a time he was driven away from there as a thief. Our misfortunes, our plans for revenge and reparation become so ridiculously small when we look at them from a distance. Naturally, he wanted to see his old acquaintances. He intended to step in to see Nils—not to hold him to account, but to present him with a gold watch.

Once more, as he set out for Dyrendal, his grandmother accompanied him on the way. But this time she could not go far—only to the gate. And, once more, there were many little troubles she confided to him because he was her only protection on earth.



She thanked him for all his letters, and for the money they had often contained. She had made friends with one of the neighbours, who read the letters to her, because it wasn't necessary that the folks in the house should know everything.

The new black skirt still hung in the attic, and there it should hang until he had a wife who could use it. And the six handkerchiefs were still in the right-hand drawer of the commode. Gunhild should have them.

At the gate, however, she must turn around.

"Can't you go with me a bit farther?"

She turned toward the fjord and shaded her eyes with her hand.

"Oh, no—it will be so far to go back again," she said.

He looked after her for a moment, as she walked toward the little cottage, leaning on her cane. Once more she had awakened a hymn that seemed to stream through his entire being. Who is rich, if not the person who has such a grandmother to remember?

He approached Dyrendal. In the courtyard there was a man wearing an old yellow straw hat and a white shirt. He emptied water from a large barrel into buckets, which he then carried into the kitchen. He had a full beard. It was Nils.

"Well—great heavens!—and I thought it was a sewing-machine agent," he said.

Knut was at Dyrendal again, and he remembered the first time he came here. 'Whitey? Died many years ago! The bay mare? Dead also! Peter Eriksen and John Ro? Both dead! Nils and Knut chatted for some time about one thing and another. A child was crying in the house. Oh, yes—Knut must go in for a moment.

Then came the moment when he took a package from his pocket and gave it to Nils. Nils was com-

pletely confused. At first he was curious; but when he discovered what the package contained, it nearly fell out of his hand to the floor. He looked at Knut and became crimson.

"Is it a joke—or have you gone stark mad? Come here, Olina! What in the world is the meaning of this?"

A short time later Knut knocked at the door of the little red cottage in the meadow.

"Come in!"

A white-haired woman sat in the centre of the room spinning. He was met with the odour of the large house at Dyrendal in former days—an odour of coffee, tobacco, potted plants, and fresh spruce on the floor.

"Good day!"

"It seemed strange not to see Martha, herself, in the large house any longer," said Knut, shaking hands with her.

To his surprise the spinning-wheel stopped, and an emotion she had been able to repress until now burst its bounds.

"Yes, no doubt, that is something you knew," she said. "And still you went down there first." Big tears rolled down her cheeks.

He realized what it meant for Hans and Martha to live as pensioners in the servants' quarters. No doubt they watched constantly the stream of life that went its accustomed way to the large house at Dyrendal, whether they or others were there as master and mistress. But they, themselves, were forgotten, and did not have much else to do than to gather bitterness in their hearts and grow old.

A moment later her face brightened, and she looked into his eyes.

"You did become a public speaker after all, Knut. But I don't suppose you remember the time when you used to clean the stable for me?" She smiled as if she had been bold again, to remind a man with a white vest about such things.

"Yes, are you not coming to hear me soon?"

She smiled, and began to spin again.

"Oh, no—it must be dreadful nonsense you are spreading about and trying to make people believe"

"Do you think it is such nonsense that we want to get rid of the big-wigs?"

She looked at him from head to foot, raised her eyebrows, and said

"Big-wig—what about you, then? What do you think you are?"

They had a good laugh over that. She rose from her chair

"I suppose you would like a cup of coffee?"

"I should like a cup of coffee. But where is the master, himself?"

"Master, himself—yes!" she repeated after him.

"I suppose he is attending a meeting of the district corporation, or something of that sort"

"One can easily see that you are a stranger here. Do you believe people will vote for a man who lives in the servants' quarters? You must ask the man in the large house about the district corporation. He has become a politician—and a liberal. The sacristan from Vassby comes over every little while and gives him his opinions"

"Yes; but I should like very much to see Hans again"

"Well—you will find him in the fields or up in the pasture, unless Nils is near by. It is not an easy matter always to pass the time away."

She was busy in the kitchen for some time preparing the coffee. Then she opened the door and looked in.

"Knut, there is one thing I should like to ask you about."

"Yes—what is that?"

"Do you tell people in your speeches that poverty is very bad—that there is nothing in the world worse than that?"

At that moment Hans opened the door and came in. He was in his shirt-sleeves, without a vest, and had a pipe in his hand. His beard was almost white. The few tufts of hair he had left were stiff as a brush.

"Well, well—I see the overseer has come back," he said, as full of fun as ever.

Then the two old people drank coffee with this young fellow in the white vest, who had once been their herd-boy. Hans almost choked when Martha said:

"Are you as good a rider as you used to be?"

"Rider?"

"Yes, don't you remember how you used to ride, up in the pasture, on the old ox?"

Then they all laughed again.

"It seems good to have a hearty laugh once more," said Martha, and she made the cottage ring with her laughter.

Hans became serious as he put down the cup.

"To tell the truth, Knut," he said, "I thought quite as much of you as I did of certain other persons at Dyrendal."

Martha sneered.

"I suppose he cares a great deal about that," she said.

When Knut went away Nils was watching for him, and accompanied him some distance down the road.

He was embarrassed, and found it difficult to express what he had in his mind.

At last he stopped and became even more embarrassed.

"There is one thing I want to talk to you about," he said nervously.

"And what is that?" Knut put his hands in his pockets and displayed his white vest.

"If I had known what I know now, I should not have suspected you that time. I must ask you to forgive me for that."

"Do you know who did it?"

"Oh, yes—I am sorry to say," said Nils, smiling out of the corner of his mouth. "Lately it has become necessary to keep the stabur locked both day and night. But it is best not to talk about that."

Nils decided to accompany Knut a bit farther. His body was rotund and his knees were stiff, as in former days. His lot was not an enviable one, he said. It was no easy matter to go, day in and day out, year after year, and scrape and bow and thank for what he had received. But that was what certain persons expected. They did not do a single thing from morning until night but just sit around and expect that. It would surprise you to know what Olina had to put up with. If she does not go up and ask the old folks for permission to do this and that in the house, there is no peace, and the old woman will sulk for a month. I have been wanting to invite my mother to make us a visit, but I am afraid the old folks would make a disturbance. He, he—if I have received anything here, you may be sure I have had to pay for it. Nils clung close to Knut, turned his toes out, and looked up into his face.

"And can you imagine why in the world they stay

here, when they know very well they only make trouble? They have enough to live on, and live comfortably. They might take pleasure trips here and there. But if they did, I suppose they would not be able to look at our fingers constantly." Nils stopped and tried to smile.

Knut had no desire to hear any more. He bade Nils good-bye. He took the path up to the summer pasture. He wanted to be among the hills again, and to lie down on his back in the sun and try to see the world once more through the eyes of the herd-boy.

Up near Lookout Hill he met a young girl who was knitting a stocking. Her face reminded him of one he felt he had known at some time.

"Whose daughter are you, my little girl?"

The girl stared at this gentleman who had strayed far out into the pasture.

"Oh, my father is Kristian Haug," she said.

"Indeed—can it be possible? Are you the daughter of Jonetta—and almost grown up? Well, well—how the time flies! You may greet your mother from one whose clothes she carried off once when he was bathing in the lake."

He went on—musing:

"She is the oldest, no doubt—but I wonder who really is her father?"

Across the lake he saw a large yellow house. Smoke rose from the chimney as formerly. But other people were living there now. Pauline was no longer alive.

The following day old John Skaret from the hamlet came up to Dyrendal. He was dressed in his Sunday clothes and had an important errand.

"Well—what important business have you on to-day?"

"Oh, I am out with invitations to a wedding," said John mysteriously, and walked on.

Nils could not control his curiosity. "A wedding—where is that going to be?"

"The wedding will be at Hamren," he said. He continued up to the servants' house, placed his cane beside the door, wiped his feet well, and went inside, carrying his coat over his arm.

On the following Sunday morning Nils saw that Martha and Hans started out afoot down the road. A wedding—was there to be a wedding at Hamren?

He found out more about it later in the day when he was on his way to church in the company of neighbours. As they were driving along they had to turn out to make way for a procession.

The Surrey from Linde, drawn by two horses, drove by. In it were Knut and his grandmother, old and wrinkled, but dressed up for the occasion. She smiled and yet had constantly to dry her eyes with her handkerchief. Knut's father and his sister, Gunhild, sat in the front seat. Then came Martha and Hans in a borrowed gig, and, after them, a long row of carriages of various sorts. The fishermen from the hamlet, who usually had to walk the long distance to the church, this day were riding.

"That is the wedding," said one, staring at the procession, which rumbled along, raising a long cloud of dust.

"The wedding?"

"Yes, Knut calls it that. But, in reality, he is celebrating his grandmother's birthday to-day. I was in the hamlet no longer ago than yesterday, and the little cottage was decorated with leaves and

heather. To-day all the flags in the hamlet are flying. And all the companions of his youth have been invited. I imagine there will be a big wedding at Hamren to-night."

Well, well—and Nils was not invited, and Kaut had not borrowed any horses from him either.

And the old folks were using a borrowed gig. That was done, no doubt, to bring disgrace upon Nils—that folks might see how ungrateful he was and how badly they were being treated. It was, no doubt, a well-planned scheme.

It was a trick they had played upon him that he would not soon forget.



THERE is no snow on the ground this year, although it is nearly Christmas. Grain is being thrashed during the day. There is an odour of it everywhere. The straw blows sky high over the roofs, and, at night, it is dark and cold, and the stars are shining.

The wind has begun to blow. At night, if one is awake, one can see a faint light moving stealthily over the floor. It is not the moonlight—it is the reflection of the red storm-clouds that sail across the sky out there in the night.

Martha lies in bed, awake, and looks at the floor. Hans is sleeping. Dyrendal sleeps. No doubt, many things are moving about that cannot be seen by daylight. Someone enters the cottage. A stranger—it is he! He did not open the door, nor did he shut it. Yet he stands there. He sits down upon a chair near her.

“Do you know me?”

“Oh, yes”—she saw him when he was a mere child, and she has not forgotten him. Thus he looks now, when he is over thirty years old. He has a watch-chain on his vest, like other young men. It is her son. He has no voice, poor fellow, but he looks at her, and she understands him. You shouldn't have done it, mother. You should have waited a few years longer. Perhaps I might have been allowed to be born.

Martha places her hand over her eyes and groans.

An hour later she is in the midst of her strange settling of scores with Him above, who has all power on His side, and who uses it so mercilessly against a poor defenceless being.

What can she do?—fall upon her face? Oh no—not yet. We have been in the presence of the great before. Become desperate—yes, that she can do! Defy Him—commit sin—oh! But does it help? There is a little cupboard, which has a drawer, well locked. When she is all alone, it might happen that she opens the drawer, but the door must be locked first, and the curtains rolled down. Look there—silver plate, twelve crowns in an envelope, spoons, forks, goblets, several shillings! Theft—sin—glaring sin—sin in silver! But how powerless they are—these attempts to pull at the rope a little from another quarter! Defiance—a grimace at heaven! Yes—but only a grimace! It is all so fruitless that she can only throw herself down and sob.

Did the stranger leave? Oh, dearest one, won't you stay—even if it is only for the night—and even if no one sees you but I?

The woman who has a son does not age. Her son is her youth, renewed. He is the life which death can never conquer. Her son is the image of Him in whom we must believe. Her own son—yes, even he can become a Saviour for her.

She turned over in her bed. She discovered that Hans also had been lying awake. He said:

“I don't want to stay here any longer as an object of mockery and derision. I must buy a farm that will be my own.”

Martha pretended she slept.

The wind howled about the eaves and rafters.

Light reflected from the clouds constantly moved across the floor.

It is at this hour that the real soul of man asserts itself and wanders about. A young, beautiful woman becomes an old, grey cat. A respectable citizen, who has been recently elected a member of the district corporation, becomes a humpbacked tailor with measuring-tape and pressing-iron. He may be seen walking across the barnyard. It is the cow-stable he wants to reach. By the light of the storm-clouds one can see that his face is wrinkled and his eyes are yellow.

That is the way he looks.

The door to the cow-stable opens. The cows fret as when they scent a beast of prey. But the visitor has an errand. It is to see the two cows which belong to Martha and Hans.

Ah—how the poor cows bellow because they get nothing to eat. Don't they get straw—and water—and sawdust? Isn't that good enough? They are becoming pooter, of course, and soon the milk they give will be nothing but water, but isn't that good enough for the old folks? Did they carry off the furniture, or did they not? Are they going to live for ever? No, the two cows that belong to them shall become so poor that they are nothing but skin and bones, some day. He! he!—

The clock ticks. Martha again places her hand over her eyes, sighs, and tries to go to sleep.

It was after midnight that Olina woke up. She sat up in bed and rubbed her eyes. It was not that the child was crying. Something else was happening somewhere about her—at least somewhere at Dyrendal. It was not fire—but she must get up.

She walked barefoot across the floor toward

the window and looked out. Several moments passed.

"Nils!"

"Hem!" he said in his sleep.

"Nils, get up! Come here to the window."

"What is the trouble?" At last he was awake.

"Come here, Nils!"

He went in the darkness and stood beside her.

"What is going on in the cow-stable, Nils? There is someone there."

"Thieves—now, in the dead of night!"

Both saw a light in the windows. It was not a light left by mistake. It moved.

"Well—great heavens!"

"Is it thieves, do you think?" Olina's voice quivered. She gripped his sleeve.

He remained silent for some time, staring at the cow-stable. Finally he said:

"It is not very hard to guess who it is."

"Do you think it is——?"

"Olina, I wonder if we are ever going to have peace here! This matter might as well be settled first as last."

He began to put on his clothes.

"Nils, you must not leave me alone here."

"Hold your tongue. This thing must come to an end sometime."

He was cold. His teeth chattered. But he stole out through the door very quietly.

In the cow-stable there are light steps upon the slippery floor. The lantern stands still. The person inside bends forward and listens, not to the wind, but to all of these resting animals—to the breathing of these animals in the peaceful night. She is fascinated by this.

"How do you dare to disturb our sleep? Have we anything to do with your sorrows, enemies, sins, and troubles? Are we not innocent? Why do you break in and awaken us, just at this time, when we might otherwise lie here and dream about freedom throughout the long night?"

The person in the barn stands still and closes her eyes. She hears this complaint, which seems to come from the sleeping animals, and she must admit it is just.

But how can she have peace until the two cows which belong to her have had something to eat? She finds some meal in a pail intended for the pigs.

Thus she carries to the two cows, holds up the light to them, and places the pail of meal before one of them. She fetches a tub of boiled potatoes for the other. Then she brings an armful of hay, which she divides between them.

The cows do not rise. They want to rest.

There—she pats them. There is still something in the world that needs her care. There, there!

At last she wipes her hands on her dress, raises the lantern, and lights up the entire stable. There are strange cows. The cow Nils and Olina received from the sacristan has already had a calf, which occupies a separate box-stall. That is one way the sacristan is worming his way into Dyrendal. There are several other strange cows spreading themselves. They seemed to own the stable—they and Nils. She had a strong desire to raise her finger and lay upon them the ancient curse: "May sickness and disease strike down the cows! May the calves be born dead! May the milk turn into blood and stench! May——"

The door opened. There were steps. Nils appeared

in the yellow lantern-light. They stood still for a moment and looked at each other. Nils approached. His face was pale—ugly. Here, in the peaceful stable, in the dead of night, she seemed to him no longer a human being, but an evil spirit.

"What, in the Lord's name, are you doing here at this hour of the night?" he hissed.

"That is not your affair, you fool!"

"Leave this stable at once! There is nothing here you can steal to-night."

"Ha, ha, ha!"

The entire stable was smitten with the excitement.

These raging voices and clenched fists and distorted faces in the yellow light were more terrifying than the storm outside. One cow after the other rose, crowded farther up in the stall, turned her head, and lowed. The bell-cow woke up, and when she rose to her feet, her bell rang as if she were calling for help from the sleeping stable.

The lantern finally reached the little red cottage. Hans was awakened by a hand which touched his shoulder.

"Get up, man!"

"What is the trouble?"

"Get up this moment! We have been driven away from Dyrendal."

Hans became wide awake, sat up in the bed, and stared at her. Was she insane?

"Driven away! No one can drive us away from Dyrendal. We have a right to be here. But what is the trouble now, at this hour of the night?"

"You sleep and don't care about anything, while he threatens us with the bailiff and jail. But if you insist on remaining here an hour longer you will see

that I shall do things that will frighten both you and others. Will you put on your clothes or will you not?"

"But where in the world can we go at this hour of the night?" Hans was bewildered, and scratched his few remaining tufts of white hair.

"You shall know everything, but come now. The shame shall be fastened upon him that he drove us from Dyrendal in the middle of the night."

Hans looked at her in a manner as if he were very much puzzled.

"Great heavens!" he exclaimed, as he began to dress.

Martha became thoughtful. There were certain things they must take with them—bedding, money, coffee-pot.

Now, toward morning, the north-west wind had become stronger, and had swept the sky clear except for a white or fiery cloud here and there that was whisked along under the stars.

Above the black mountains in the east an ice-cold moon appeared. It looked down quietly upon two forms that moved along the road, driven by the wind, loaded down with bedding and baskets, their shadows following them like drifting clouds over the frozen ground.

The wind forced them to take long steps and to hurry on. It was as if they were being driven with lashes, doomed never to come back again.

At the house of Kristian Haug there were loud knocks on the door. He woke up. There were more knocks. He got up and went to the window. There were people outside. The devil! Did they expect him to let them in at this hour?

Ah—he seemed to recognize one of them. Well, well——

When he opened the door he saw Hans and Martha.

“You must take us in, Kristian,” said Martha.  
“We are homeless. He has driven us away from Dyrendal.”



It was clear they could not remain for ever with one of Nils Dyrendal's cottagers.

Oh, wait at any rate until Hans has had a good sleep. But sleep—that was exactly what he was neither willing nor able to do. Sleep? Hans had at last become furious. He went about with bloodshot eyes, and pounded the walls, and frightened both Jonetta and the children. When it became dark he would wander in the direction of Dyrendal and walk in wide circles around it. He would stare at the large house, and chew his tobacco cud vigorously and spit and spit. Ha, ha! It was not true. He was dreaming. He had not been so foolish. It was a lie. That scoundrel! Dyrendal—the salmon-fishery—the woods—swept away! A herring-catch again—swept to sea—no, not this time! It was a lie—a lie—a lie!

He walked on. He tore at his beard. He put his fingers through his slender fringe of hair. He made straight for Dyrendal. He would go in—throw them out— But, wait a bit—then there might be— He looked at his fists. The boy could not stand it.

He walked on again, and stopped again. Ha, ha! Set fire to it—the devil, no! See—there is Dyrendal—see there! A light is burning in the living-room. They are enjoying themselves! They are comfortable! But he—he is homeless! He walked and walked, and stared at the bright and cosy house that no longer belonged to him.

He did not know that Kristian Haug was following him at a distance.

Martha threatened him one day with the doctor and the insane asylum if he did not go to sleep that night.

At last the powerful old man did go to sleep. He occupied the little spare bedroom, and he slept two days and two nights.

"Can't you get them to go away?" said Jonetta to Kristian. "It makes me feel creepy to have them here any longer."

Finally they did go away.

Hans had been going about the last few days looking down and casting mysterious side glances. A large farm across the lake would be sold at auction to the highest bidder. A bold venture with the net again! Wait—you shall see! Even if he had been fleeced, he would show them that he was man enough to gather riches once more. Big man, member of Parliament—oh, he was not an old man yet! That scoundrel at Dyrendal would see.

They went to the auction. Hans was one of the bidders. Martha perspired and shivered. She knew that the little money they had left would be staked on an uncertainty. Begin with a mortgage—a risk—these two old people? Never mind—let it go! He must rage until he is through.

The bids began to mount. It was an estate for a big-wig—woods, cottages, horses, cows. The bids went higher. Anyone else? Hans put tufts of his beard in his mouth, and was pale. He bid higher—then he bowed his head and remained silent. Was he afraid to make another bid? Was he not the same any longer as when he made the big venture and bought Dyrendal?

Do I hear another bid ? The bailiff looked at him and raised his hammer. It fell. Hans was too much ashamed to look at Martha. They went away as homeless as they came.

Are you an old man now, Hans ?

But they could begin in a small way, as they did when they were young. Then they might look around for a good chance to buy something bigger later on. There was no great hurry

They bought a little farm across the fjord. From there they could see Dyrendal as a little speck among the hills far away in another parish. They had a couple of cows and a little horse again. Hans helped to clean the stable, and Martha would sometimes lend a hand in the field, as in former days.

It was a relief to work hard and become tired. After a hard day's work it was possible to sleep. The day came when they did not have the energy to rage and talk about their misfortune any more. But they did want to rise in the world again—not at one throw, oh, no—not yet, at any rate ; but they could save and save, and add shilling to shilling—up, up ! They did want riches again and their former splendour.

Their thoughts were on Dyrendal. When they closed their eyes at night they were the master and mistress again. They drove up the avenue lined with trees. They walked through the fields to examine the crops. They had feasts for the big-wigs in the large bright rooms—until Nils would appear from the darkness and throw them out. But it was a relief to rise early in the morning and work hard all day. So they toiled on, in order to save, and to forget, and to sleep.

They became greedy—not exactly for money—they were collecting weapons. They wanted revenge. How,

they did not know exactly, yet, but they must have money. Do not tell Hans any more that horse-trading is not proper. Ah, the old devil which he had kept down for so many years, at last he must be let loose again. There were still fairs. Politics and revivals—the devil may care! Scoundrel—never mind! He did not drive up the avenue to Dyrendal any more—not yet. And a drink to ratify a bargain—when that happened Martha must take him back to the lodging-house. And it happened more than once, so folks said. Did the old woman laugh and take it as a joke? At any rate, it did not make her hair grey, for it was already white.

But Hans was not the same man at horse-trading as formerly. It seemed to him the horses cost so much. He did not dare any longer to put so much at stake. And the horses had become so wild. It required great strength to manage them. This powerlessness made him desperate. He wanted to make a big venture again, if only to shake himself free of this feeling that he was old. He made up his mind to buy a shipload of herring, to go to some other place, to make a fortune. But he came back, and had not dared to buy. He tramped through the mountains on his old legs to find silver mines or copper mines. He wanted his wealth back. He wanted to be the same as before.

There was one person who was glad they had finally moved away. That person was Nils. The gossip among the neighbours finally came to an end, and most of them took his part. Didn't they know the old folks? Nils knew in his heart there was only one thing he had wished for, and that was peace. But there could never be peace as long as the old folks were there. Then, too, wasn't it better for the old

folks to get away than to fret themselves sick over everything they saw? Now he was finally the master of Dyrendal, and he did not have folks before his eyes whom he must constantly thank. Gone—to the opposite side of the fjord—it was almost too good to believe.

Nils was energetic both at home and abroad. It was he who started the movement for the erection of a community electric plant. And it was talked about quite generally that, at the next election, he would be made the chairman of the parish.

Then he heard one day that the old folks had sold their little farm across the fjord and bought another farther away. They did not feel at home. No, of course not—they could not feel at home unless they had someone to nag at and fret over. The following year, however, they had sold this place, too. They did not feel at home there, either.

Shortly afterwards, Nils and Olua were surprised one day by a bit of news. The old folks had bought a small farm in the immediate neighbourhood of Dyrendal and would soon move in. Nils cursed. His wife shuddered at the thought of it. What in the world did they want there?

They came.

The people who moved to the little farm among the hills overlooking Dyrendal did not come in grand style. The house had been red once upon a time, but the weather had long since removed the paint, except in patches. Did the old folks repair the house? No, they dug in the earth. They wanted to save. From this spot they could see Dyrendal! From a window they could see everything that happened in the fields.

"See, there is Hans again," folks said. When he

went to church he did not appear as a big-wig in a long overcoat any more. The minister and the doctor did not shake hands with him and inquire about his health. He wore faded homespun, and his back was bent. He preferred not to mingle with the crowd. But still he looked out upon the world with something roguish in his red, watery eyes.

He had come down considerably. Nils, the new master of Dyrendal, would come driving to church in a Surrey. An old man would step to the side of the road to make way for him. He would take off his hat. This old man was Hans.

. . . . .

The days passed. The snow came. It was Christmas-time again. The two old folks tried to help one another and chatted together.

"Let me feed the cows this time," said Hans.

"Oh, no—you have your wood to split, and your arms are not very strong, you know."

"Well, all right—would you mind giving the mare a bit of hay while you are in the stable, then?"

"Yes, but listen, Hans, you have promised and promised to get some fresh bedding for the pig. Do you think he ought to lie there in the wet snow during Christmas?"

"Hem—you can't expect me to remember everything," said Hans, lighting his pipe with a live coal from the fire.

On Christmas Eve they had scrubbed both the house and themselves as well as they were able. They decided to eat a simple meal and go to bed.

Nevertheless, after Hans had gone to bed, Martha said she must go to the stable again to see about a cow.

Outdoors the snow was deep and the moon shone.

There was smooth, bright ice on the lake. The trees had a dress of feathery white. The cold penetrated to the very marrow.

It was late at night that Nils had to get up to bring a drink of water to one of the children. He walked across the cold floor to the window. He breathed upon the frost-covered window-pane to make a clear spot and looked out. There was bright moonlight, and the snow lay deep upon the ground and upon the roofs. The young people would have good sleighing to the chapel in the morning.

But what was that in the courtyard? Nils breathed upon the window-pane again to make the clear spot larger. Was it a man—out there now—at this hour on Christmas Eve?

"What are you looking at?" asked his wife, who had become wide awake. He did not answer, so she wrapped herself in the coverlet and went to the window. She also breathed upon the window-pane and looked out.

"What are you looking at?" she asked again.

"Don't you see?"

"Is there somebody there? What——!"

The ground was silvery white. The ruts had been worn bright by the sleigh-runners. But there was a dark object in the centre of the courtyard that looked at the buildings, at the sky, then toward the window. It cast a large shadow over the white snow.

"Do you know who it is?" asked Nils.

"Yes, yes—is the stable locked?"

The object remained for some time, then walked and looked about as if reluctant to leave.

It was cold in the house, and Nils and Olina were chilled through, but they did not dare to leave the window. There was something gruesome about

this visit at night, on Christmas Eve, when folks usually stayed at home.

At last the dark object began to move up the road toward the hills. Oh, how these two felt the short, tripping steps! How strange that she dared to wander about alone at night!

"I wonder when we are going to have peace here," said Nils, clenching his fists.

It began to seem as if Dyrendal were haunted. When they went out in the dark they could no longer feel safe.

On the first of May, in the evening, the trades unions would have a large celebration in the town. The principal speaker was to be the socialist editor, Knut Hamren. The trades union hall was full of people both on the main floor and in the galleries. When the fiery speaker came upon the platform and stepped to the speaker's desk, he was greeted by applause from a thousand hands. He had been so fortunate as to serve a term in prison on account of certain radical articles that had appeared in his paper, so that he was now popular in earnest.

The new Cavalry General, Murat, carried a sword and swung it above his head. Forward, dragoons! He attacked present-day society. Priests and officers and capitalists and all other blood-suckers were completely annihilated, although they, time and time again, rose up and closed their ranks. His good dragoons did not exactly shout "*Vive l'Empereur!*" but they clapped their hands and shouted their approval so that the house literally shook—especially when he made some master-stroke and a head or two flew through the air. And when a hiss was heard



there was a hurricane of shouts that the disturbers should be thrown out.

What was that? The speaker became more subdued. His eyes were glued to a certain spot in the front of the hall. There were two old people on the front seat. They looked like simple farmers. They were his master and mistress at the time he was herd-boy at Dyrendal.

The speaker did not stop altogether, but he remembered one day when he had cleaned the stable for the old woman, and she was milking, that she said:

"Yes, if you ever become a great man, so that you make speeches, then I shall come to hear you and shall sit in the front row."

Now she sat there in the front row.

The old man was very attentive. He would put tufts of his beard into his mouth, and shake his head and scule. But Martha--what was that! Martha expressed her approval in her own way. She nodded her head and closed her eyes.

"Knut is getting along very well," she must have thought, "so I can take a little nap." It was even worse than that. When the speaker was in the midst of a fiery attack and was just collecting himself for the grand climax, he heard a loud snore.

After the programme, Knut hunted up Hans and Martha, and took them to the best café in the town.

How little they looked like important people now, by electric light--old and poorly dressed as they were. People stared at the old woman in her kerchief, and the old farmer in his homespun. Knut brought them into a private booth and ordered a supper of salmon and Rhine wine.

"We are getting old now," said Martha, bewildered by the light and the many people everywhere about.

"And we do not dare to travel so far alone any more. But we heard that you were going to speak——"

"Dear me, did you make the long journey merely for that?"

"Oh, no—we had a few things to sell also," said Hans, quietly nodding his head.

"I see you have become a great man, after all," said Martha. She smiled and closed her eyes as if thinking of former days. "But I wonder," she opened her eyes, "if all that you said was not dreadful nonsense."

Hans had a roguish look in his eye.

"There was one thing, though, that was too much for you," he said, and shook his head.

"Is that so—what was that?"

"Oh, well, never mind—but there was one word you did not dare to use. It was too difficult. Why—one must be almost a Cabinet Minister in order to speak that word."

"A word? My dear man, what word is that?" asked Knut, becoming more and more curious.

Hans was somewhat embarrassed, but conquered himself, and finally said:

"It is a word I learned many years ago. It is 'disqualification—procedure.'"

They all laughed heartily.

When the salmon had been brought in on a silver platter, Knut must serve the old folks. Hans said he would take only half a portion—not a bite more.

"But, my dear man, you don't get food like this every day," said Martha.

The old man bent down and whispered to Martha, while stroking his head:

"It will be too expensive for Knut."

"Nonsense—it will cost just as much whether you eat it or not."

Thus he was coaxed to eat by both Martha and Knut.

Later in the evening they walked down the brilliantly lighted main street toward the harbour—Hans, broad shouldered and bearded, wearing a brown plush hat, Martha, thin, wrinkled, and bent, wearing a large shawl over her shoulders and a black kerchief on her head. Their former herd-boy wore a spring overcoat and silk hat, and carried a silver-headed cane. He accompanied them to their lodging-house, because the old couple were afraid they might not be able to find it.

"Can you understand," said Hans, as they were preparing for bed, "how he can be cross as an ox when he preaches, and kind and condescending when he is with old acquaintances?"

"Oh, yes, that is not so strange," said Martha. "But what I can't get through my head is, why he is so much against the well-to-do. Well-to-do? What is he himself, then?"

"GOOD DAY!"

"Good day! What's the news?"

It was Jens Rabben who was delivering mails on a bright summer day. He drove a brown mare hitched to a cart and let his feet dangle between the wheels. In his lap he held a mail-bag, and as he drove from farm to farm he had his hat pulled down on one side and sang.

The postman is like fate. Everything that happens in the world is in the papers, and the papers he carries in his mail-bag. But the letters: they are different—they are sealed. Maids come out to meet him. Has he anything for them? Others run after him and give him a bit of white paper with slanting characters on it. Jens nods and puts it into the bag, drives on, and sings another song.

To-day he drove up to the little farm-house occupied by Martha and Hans. Newspapers? Oh, no—the old man is no longer in politics. He does not keep even a single paper.

Martha and Hans were raking hay behind the house. Martha was white haired and bent. Hans was in his shirt-sleeves. His red braces formed a cross on his back. The postman! They raised their heads and blinked their eyes.

"This is fine weather for haying," said Jens, beginning to hum a tune, taking his time to open his bag and finger the letters. The old folks leaned upon their rakes and looked at him attentively. The brown

mare stretched her head to slacken the reins, and began to eat of the freshly cut hay.

"You have no news for us, have you?" asked Martha, wondering who in the wide world would write to them.

Jens hummed and hunted. His red, beardless face was insensible to everything in the world except that everyone should get his or her letter. The old folks looked at one another. What if it should turn out to be bad news?

"No—it was the big one—yes, there it is! That is it!" said Jens, talking to the mail and to himself. He produced a large letter closed with several seals. "There—I was beginning to fear there wasn't any for you after all. Gee-up, Brownie! And good-bye! Now we may sing again!" Jens drove on with his hat tilted to one side and sang.

Hans turned the letter over and over, and held it at a distance from his eyes to enable him to read the address. Martha looked over his shoulder.

It had foreign stamps. No doubt it had come a long distance. There was something stiff inside.

There was no hurry about the hay. They must go in. Hans went ahead. Martha followed more slowly, using the rake as a cane.

Once inside, both Hans and Martha put on their glasses. Martha was best at reading handwriting. She opened the letter with a table-knife. She took out the stiff object first. It was wrapped in fine tissue-paper. A photograph! They put their heads together and saw a full-length picture of a gentleman, beardless, bald headed, wearing striped trousers, black frock-coat, and eyeglasses. He was not exactly a youth—he was, perhaps, forty or fifty years old.

"This could not have been intended for us," thought Hans.

"Now we shall see what the letter says," Martha replied. She seated herself at the head of the table, held the letter before her eyes, placed it on the table again, and adjusted her spectacles farther down on her nose, and finally began reading :

"Dear father——"

Hans gave a start.

Martha looked at him over her glasses, then read on :

"You will be surprised, perhaps, when a full-grown man bobs up in the far west and pre—presents himself as your—your son."

Martha lowered the letter and looked at Hans over her glasses again. The old man burst out laughing.

He began to scratch his hairy breast inside his shirt. Then he chewed his tobacco-cud vigorously and looked at Martha.

She held up the letter again, and began to read :

"But as these things now lie so far in the past, I hope you and I are agreed that they can be mentioned between ourselves. My mother's name was Birit Besvolden, when she was a girl in Norway." Martha fixed her eyes upon the wall, but her curiosity soon compelled her to read on. "When I was grown up, she told me that you and she had been engaged at one time, and that, later, the engagement had been broken off. It is only right you should know that mother was a proud woman—shortly after she arrived in America she gave birth to a boy, and I am that boy. She did not want to write and tell you about it. The first few years she toiled and struggled alone for us both. Then she married a veterinary surgeon, and, as they had no children together, I grew up in their

home. They treated me kindly, and kept me in good schools. Later I was fortunate, and became well established in business. Now I am a factory owner and the mayor of my city here in Wisconsin. Mother has been dead many years, but she often told me that my father had a large farm in Norway, and I have always thought that some day he and I must become acquainted. I hope you will send me your photograph. It is not altogether impossible that I make a visit to Norway some day—perhaps next summer.”

Martha lowered the letter, and began to meditate. Hans put tufts of his beard in his mouth. There was silence for a long time.

At last they looked at one another, then Hans quickly turned his eyes toward the wall. He did not know whether he should be proud or ashamed.

Martha drew a long breath, and said “Hem.” A fly buzzed at the window. There they sat and breathed heavily. They were not dreaming. They had received this letter. It was not a joke. And the cottage hadn’t tumbled down. The photograph was there, and the letter also.

“He, he!” Hans snickered finally.

“He, he, he!” ventured Martha, dryly.

“Well——” she said, raising her eyebrows. Then there was a pause again.

“That is news to me,” said Hans at last.

After a while Martha recovered her speech.

“I thought you and I had experienced a little of everything, but it seems we have not reached the end yet.”

“That is something new for me,” said Hans, as if to excuse himself.

“New? I should say the affair with Burt Besvolden was rather old.”

There was another long pause. Both thought of the days long ago—long, long ago.

Then Martha looked at Hans. She took off her glasses and looked at him again :

“ So you have a son, Hans ! ”

Despite the unpleasant features of the situation, their faces brightened, and both began to smile. It had happened at times when they were not on good terms that one had thrown it up to the other : “ It is your fault that we don’t have any children ! ” But who could decide such a matter ? Now it had been decided. Hans stood with hands clasped. It was not his fault.

Martha picked up the photograph again.

“ Well, well—and that is how he looks ! So you are the father of such a gentleman—you, Hans ! ”

The old man shook his head and smiled. He must also look at the photograph again. Then they put their heads together, and looked, and looked.

“ He looks like a real gentleman,” said Hans.

“ He is a ~~looking~~ fellow,” said Martha. “ And for that it isn’t hard to guess who is his father.”

“ No, don’t you think so ? ” Hans shook his head again. Mayor—Wisconsin—factory owner—a real gentleman : did he look like him ? The joy of fatherhood which Hans had never felt before shot through his soul like darts of fire.

Martha sighed. That Hans and another woman had a child together was one thing. But it happened so long ago—— It was worse that she now, alone, remained childless. She and Hans were not alike in that any longer. Hans was no longer childless.

At last they rose to their feet. This letter seemed like a distinguished visitor.

“ Great heavens, how disorderly it looks here ! ”



said Martha, and immediately began to tidy the house. They were not altogether alone any longer.

During the afternoon the rakes made rapid strokes over the field. The two old people must keep close together, because now there was something they must constantly chat about.

"I wonder if he is married," said Martha, leaning for a moment upon her rake.

"It is reasonable to suppose that he is married and has children too," thought Hans. It occurred to him that perhaps he was a grandfather also—to a large number of persons out in the great world.

They raked in silence, but continued to think about the same thing. At the supper table they must read the letter again, and look at the photograph. After they had gone to bed they talked about him again. A son had entered their life. Martha had a strange feeling when she thought of Brit Besvolden, whom she had robbed of a sweetheart long, long ago. If she sinned against Brit at that time, she might make amends by being kind to her boy. Ah—and in a way she had a right to look upon him as almost her own. A son of Hans was, of course, her stepson. But he was without a mother, and Martha would be his mother. That much she owed Brit, who was dead.

The two old people went to sleep and dreamed about him. They woke up earlier than usual. It was as if their son had called them to a new and wonderful day.

As time passed, Martha especially had him in her thoughts early and late. "Your son," she said at first; but soon she was saying "our son."

Naturally, they must write to him. For days and weeks the two old people went about and talked over what they should say in the letter. He became more

and more a living being to them. He began to be present in the little cottage, making it necessary for them always to be industrious. Martha dressed better than she had been in the habit of doing. Who could know that he would not come quite unexpectedly some day and take them unawares.

Toward autumn folks noticed that the weather-beaten cottage had a new coat of paint. They also made improvements inside. Martha went to a neighbour for slips so that she might have potted plants in the windows.

"What if he should make up his mind to settle here when he comes home?" said Hans one day. That was a great idea—it was to them like the first peep of dawn after a long night.

They had the picture framed and hung it on the wall over the table. Eating became more agreeable. Martha cooked better food. Every meal seemed like a feast to Hans.

"It might happen that he would like to buy a farm in the neighbourhood," thought Martha one day.

"Yes, if there is any that is large enough. He would not be satisfied with just a couple of cows."

"If Nils were offered sixty or seventy thousand, he might be willing to sell Dyrendal."

"Hem!" That was something worth thinking about.

Ah—this Dyrendal, which they had lost—which now they could admire only at a distance! What if the son should buy Dyrendal, and should take his old parents to live with him! Such a gentleman as he is would, no doubt, drive about in a four-wheeled carriage. The day might come when they, too, his old parents, would drive to church in grand style

again, and folks would bow and take off their hats to them. But when that day came, Hans would have nothing to do with them.

Autumn came, and cold weather. There was much snow. On stormy nights Martha would lie awake, but she was not as miserable as *formerly*. The wicked faces in the darkness gave way to a brighter face, a good face, which came out of the darkness to rescue them—their son—he who would soon redress all the wrongs they had suffered.

They began to save more than ever before, in order to lay aside as much as possible. Their thought was no longer to become rich themselves. No, but they wanted to have something to give to him—their son. No matter how rich he was, they did not want to be poor—they wanted that he should inherit something—that he should have something to thank them for. Martha made butter and sold it short in weight. She even wished sometimes she could mix sand with it so that it would weigh more. It was deceit. It was sin. Ha, ha, ha—sin! Couldn't they afford to commit a sin or two? Wait until he comes—he! Several old acquaintances had borrowed money from them. Now they needed their money. They began to demand it. It worked hardship on others; but they could afford that, if only he would come—he!

For the first time in many years Martha appeared in public again on Christmas Day. She and Hans drove to church together.

No one took his hat off to them—oh, no; but Hans wore his faded blue overcoat once more. Folks might stare at them as much as they liked, and ask how it happened that they had begun to spruce up again. Let them ask. If they only knew how the old folks

went about as in a dream! Wait until next year. They might come driving to church with a third person.

The day was dark. Candles were burning on the altar. The organ sounded. The congregation sang. Martha, wearing spectacles, bowed her white head and sang.

Once more, as she sat in the church, she seemed to be changed into another person. She put her own meaning into the hymn. Now she was old. Soon, perhaps, all would be over. But was it possible that she should live to pour all of the virgin warmth of her soul over one who would feel thankful, and who would be worthy? Was that the reason she clung to this stranger whom she had never seen? Her last hope! That, or nothing! That, or death! She thought of him as she sang. Her singing made her warmer, richer, more filled with happiness. Once again she seemed to be lifted up, together with other women—myriads of women. All the mothers in the world were there. They gathered about a large throne. Once more the room became filled with the song of the mothers.

"The son—oh, no, not altogether! But he is so dreadfully far away. He will come sometime, but the journey is beset with so many dangers. O Lord, hold Your protecting hand over him so that I may see him before I die."

While the minister was in the pulpit, Martha, still wearing her glasses, kept her eyes on the painting above the altar. She was looking at the woman in black who knelt at the feet of the crucified Son.

She would rather have seen Him when He rose to deliver the Sermon on the Mount. Then His mother could have stood in the crowd and could have felt

proud to have a Son who was able to hurl such powerful words of cleansing truth at the people.

When her son, the great mayor, should come from America next summer, perhaps he might give some lectures in the neighbourhood. Such a man could do a good deal of cleaning up in one way and another. She, herself, would sit in the first row. There were plenty of scoundrels who might be benefited by hearing a word of truth.

As Martha was sitting in the church she began to have a vision of the day when there would be peace in her soul. When she had someone she could be kind to and in whom she could have perfect trust, and when also he had made the people better so that she could think of them without hatred—then, yes, then, one day, she could die in peace.

Think how wonderful it would be to die in peace !  
Spring came at last    Then came also another letter

MARTHA was dressed up. She had ear-rings, silk shawl, the gold chain which belonged to her watch and which she had carried on her high chest in the days of her prosperity. Hans wore a white collar and the duffel coat which he bought for Nils Dyrendal's wedding. It was a trifle faded, but it looked well enough so that he could wear it a few times yet.

A trip to town had become quite an undertaking. Therefore Martha carried a basket of eggs in one hand and a pail of butter in the other, while Hans had thrown a carcass of veal in a sack over his shoulder.

Oh, no—they did not travel first class. Nor did they eat with the big-wigs in the saloon. That time was past. They stood on the forward deck of the steamer that bright August day and chatted in a friendly manner. No one about them suspected the object of their journey.

They looked at the fjord which widened out into a great sea. It was a long time since their first meeting, on a journey to the midsummer fair in town, and the method of travelling was very different from what it had been in those days.

The stately Lofoten boats, with tall mast and white stripe at the water-line, were no more. And the fisherman with a beard under his chin, who baked pancakes in the bottom of a herring barrel, he also was no more. He had been relieved by a gentleman in a motor-boat, who smoked cigarettes, and who was a member of a trades union. How the time flies!

The following day they walked down the broad main street of the town to the very Grand Hotel itself, and they were dressed in their very best. They were pale from excitement, but they smiled as they looked at one another. They felt almost as if they were to have an audience with the King.

At the Grand Hotel they were in the habit of going around to the kitchen door, because, of course, they never went there except to sell butter and eggs. This time they walked straight up to the main entrance. A porter stood at the door. His clothes were covered with gold braid. He looked fiercely at them and told them to go around the other way. But Martha straightened up and said.

"Our son lives here."

The porter was informed that their son was the mayor from Wisconsin. He looked in the register, and nodded his head. Thus Martha disciplined the upstart. Hans took off his hat in order not to be taken unawares if the son should suddenly appear.

The porter led them up a stairway that had red carpets and brass railings at the side. Good Lord, but it was beautiful! Then they were brought into a large drawing-room that had a tall mirror in a gilded frame, paintings upon the walls, and furniture covered with yellow silk. Oh, yes—he lived as befitted a person of rank. But, on this day, they had more important things to think of.

"Sit down and wait a moment," said the porter, "and the mayor will be informed. But whom shall I announce?"

Martha smiled and raised her eyebrows.

"Haven't we told you that we are his parents?" she asked.

He bowed and walked away, his coat-tails, decorated with gold buttons, flapping at each step.

"Let us sit down," said Martha, after they had waited for some time.

"Never in the world," said Hans, shaking his head. "You won't get me to sit down on those chairs."

They kept close together in order to be ready. Hans stroked his beard and decided to bow.

At last the door opened. A tall, broad-shouldered man, bald and beardless, wearing a light suit, entered with light steps. His lips were thin, and they became still thinner when he began to smile. He noticed the two old people who tried to bow, and went toward them with quick steps. But he stopped abruptly with a jerk, took off his eyeglasses, and began to clean them. It was as if he had found something very different from what he had expected.

"Good morning!"

The mayor had dreamed many years about this father who lived far away in the land of sagas. The father had become a sort of chieftain, like those in Snorre Sturleson's story, something distant and not clearly defined, perhaps wearing a coat of mail and a shield, and wielding Thor's hammer, and drinking from the braga-beaker in the hall. But this thread-bare peasant, who stood there, his mouth stained with tobacco juice—was that the chieftain? Was that his father? And that old bent woman—she looked as if she had stepped out of a museum! It seemed to him, at that moment, as if a large dream-bubble had burst, and there before him had appeared two cave-creatures who had actually risen up through the floor.

But he collected himself and became cordial. Oh, he had seen people like this before, when he stopped to think. It was when immigrants were taken to the



West in charge of an agent. And here and there on the prairies there were, no doubt, still to be found such old people, who, in their day, had come from a mountain valley in Norway, with their tickets and rose-coloured chests and empty hands. But his father—he was supposed to be a rich farmer, a chieftain!

After some time he succeeded in persuading them to sit down, and a conversation of a sort was started. Hans and Martha asked if he had enjoyed the trip, but after that they could only say "yes" and "well, well," and listen to him. He asked if Hans smoked. Oh, yes! He brought out a gold cigarette case, opened it—please! But Hans shook his head and grinned—he did not understand that kind of smoking.

Oh, yes—he was the mayor of his city, and a factory owner. He manufactured farming machinery, and hoped to find a good representative in Norway.

"Then he will not settle down with us!" shot through Martha's mind, and chilled her through and through.

They went into the restaurant, and found a booth with seats furnished with soft leather cushions. The mayor ordered lunch.

"Is that an American dish?" asked Martha, trying to be motherly.

"What did you say?" He looked at her above his eyeglasses.

"Is luns a sort of food they use in America?" she repeated.

"If lunch is—— Ha, ha, ha!" His bluish teeth showed much gold.

"Yes, we have lunch in America, too—ha, ha, ha!"

Martha became crimson. She did not understand how to talk with such fine people.

He had a gold pin in his neck-tie, and large gold cuff-buttons with links. His shirt had gold stripes. The effect the man, as a whole, made was that of being freshly laundered and very expensive.

Hans gave him side glances from time to time, and thought :

"Can it be possible that you are the father of this big-wig? If you are, Hans, you are more of a man than you thought you were."

Hans called him "Mister." Neither did Martha dare to call him anything else. And the son would not call Hans, father, nor would he call Martha, mother.

"Can you come out to visit us now?" asked Hans, with some hesitation.

Out in the country? Well—oh, no! That night the tourist steamship would start for the North Cape, and he was one of a large American company—and next month he would have to be in Kristiania in order to arrange about a representative there—well—and a week later he would have to attend a stamp collectors' congress in Paris.

Congress—what kind of congress? The old people did not hear very well.

Congress of stamp collectors! He was one of the biggest experts in this field in the U.S.A. He had a collection for which he had been offered a fortune.

The two old folks looked at one another. It is not always an easy matter to have a son who ventures so far beyond anything one is used to.

"Tell me one thing," he said, cleaning his eyeglasses and putting them on again. "Where is the land in Norway?"

There was a pause.

"Where is the land?" echoed Hans.

"Yes, I look about me everywhere, and I see only rocks and water. But the land—where are the large farms? And the roads—where do you drive? Or perhaps you don't use horses and wagons in Norway? Is it like Iceland, where they use ponies with pack-saddles?"

Hans and Martha once more exchanged glances.

"Oh, yes, we have horses and wagons," said Hans with pride.

"You have? But the roads? You cannot drive straight up a mountain-side."

"Ha, ha, ha," Hans must laugh. Martha also laughed. They did not know how in the world to get any conversation started that would have any sense in it.

The son played an altogether different melody than they. The more they talked, the more strange they became to one another.

"I understand you have a large farm," said the mayor finally, lighting a cigarette. "Do you use motor-ploughs—and what make?"

"Motor-ploughs!" Hans shook his head. It became worse and worse. He did not use anything of that sort.

"Are the farmers beginning to use autos here? In America the farmers are now using them quite extensively."

"Autos!" The old people shook their heads.

"How large is your farm?" he asked.

Oh, they said, it was only a small farm.

"Does it pay to work a small farm here? For that matter—small—big—that depends upon what you mean. Have you as many as a hundred cows and twenty or thirty horses? That is what we call a small farm in America."

The old folks looked around as if they were hunting for something behind which they might hide. After some time Hans succeeded in explaining that they had a couple of cows and a little fjord horse.

There was another long pause. The American again cleaned his eye-glasses and looked more closely at the old folks.

Martha and Hans found it hard to eat. The food began to stick in their throats. They had known that they were going to meet a great man; but this—it was far beyond them. They were simple peasant folk from a mountain valley, and in his presence they became as dust and vapour.

They began to talk about something else.

However, the mayor from Wisconsin seemed depressed. Why had he arranged a meeting like this with his father? Why should one deprive oneself of an illusion? This old man certainly did not come out of a story-book. He and Martha were simply proletarians, who did not know even how to use a knife and fork.

They talked about the Scandinavians in America. He had hundreds of them in his employ.

Have you many workmen?" asked Hans, completely overwhelmed.

"I have five thousand employees altogether," said the mayor, lighting a fresh cigarette.

"Five thou—— Great heavens! I suppose you have to pay out a great deal of money every day?"

The mayor smiled with his thin lips:

"Oh, yes—much—little—that depends! In Norwegian money, I suppose it would amount to about two hundred thousand crowns a day."

"A day!" Both were astounded.

"Oh, yes," smiled the mayor, and nodded his head.  
"In America that is not very much."

The mayor ordered coffee, and lighted another cigarette.

The two old people exchanged glances and understood one another. Thus was all so far above their heads that they became simply beggars. One thing they realized: their hope that he would buy a farm and settle down near them and redress their wrongs was futile—it had vanished into thin air. And the few thousand crowns they had saved, in order to be able to give him something one day, would be to him no more than a little pocket-money. This son was not a human being, but a vision. Their son—they might as well ask King David to be their son.

They drank coffee. The two peasants drank their coffee from the saucer as they were in the habit of doing. The mayor was reserved and became more and more sleepy. He took no pleasure in being with the old folks, nor they in being with him. These three became more and more strange to one another the longer they tried to become acquainted.

"Well—I am sorry, but I have many things to do in order to get ready for my trip to the North Cape," he said, and called the waiter.

When they had risen from their seats, the mayor shook hands with Hans and Martha. He smiled with his thin lips, displaying the gold in his mouth.

"It has been a great pleasure to meet you," he said. "Good luck! I hope to hear from you some-time again."

Later the old folks walked down the broad main street alone. They felt as if they had ventured into a place that was too fine for them, and had been thrown out.

Some time passed before they could collect themselves. They stopped and looked at one another. They tried to smile, but were on the point of weeping. They looked up into the sky and wondered whether it would rain.

"Did you sell your butter and eggs," asked Hans.

"Oh, yes, and you—did you get rid of the veal?"

"Yes—that was a simple matter."

They crossed the street, stopped again, and looked around. It began to dawn upon them that they hadn't a thing in the world to do in the town any more.

"Do you know if there is a steamer to-night?" she asked.

"There is not; but we can get a steamer to Vanvik."

That would mean a walk of ten miles, first up over a high ridge, then down again on the other side. But both had a strong desire to get away from the town and back home before night.

Soon they were sitting upon the deck of the steamer with their eyes closed. Their one wish seemed to be to get home and go to bed.

They stepped ashore at Vanvik and set out on the long journey afoot.

It was hard work to walk uphill. Hans carried the pail and the basket. Martha had an empty sack, rolled up, under her arm.

They had to stop often to rest. Martha became so tired. Each time they stopped she had to sit down. They talked only of this and that, and looked at one another, and tried to smile.

The August day began to change into night as they reached the crest of the ridge. Ah—it seemed good to think the climbing was over. They saw, stretched out before them, many miles of billowing mountains, and beyond them the yellow evening sky. Beyond the

mountains lay also the ocean, from which came the waters of the fjord. They wandered toward the yellow northern sky, while the twilight changed into darkness over moor and heath.

They sat down on the heath and ate the food they had brought for the journey. They chewed and swallowed. They looked at one another and tried again to smile. Hans brought out his pipe. It was not until his pipe was lit that a word escaped him.

"He was a great man!" he said.

"Yes, yes," said Martha, with a dry laugh.

They rose and continued the journey. They were met by a gust of wind. It was the north-west wind beginning to blow. They walked slowly toward the yellow light in the northern sky. They bent forward against the wind and pressed on. Hans must hold his hat from blowing off. Martha's skirts fluttered. The light in the north made dim shadows that constantly followed them.

"A storm is coming," Martha remarked.

"Yes, but I think we can pull through all right. We are more than half-way."

From the ocean large dark clouds began to rise and sail across the northern sky. They looked like living beings—animals, men, ghosts in black and gold. Now and then Martha would raise her head and worry over the storm that was brewing for the night. Hans carried the pail in one hand and the basket on a stick over his shoulder. Martha did not notice that, now and again, his eyes would light up as he thought:

"He was a devil of a fine fellow!"

At last they reached the neighbourhood of their own little farm. It was pitch-dark when, late at night, they passed Dyrendal.

They had not dared to go near the place since the

night they moved away. Now, as it was dark, they could sit down beside the road for a moment and look at their former home. Nils had just installed electric light, so that the farm looked like a fairy-land under the many bright lights.

When they rose to continue on their way, Martha began to dread to go home, for it was not merely the picture on the wall she must struggle with. Something else awaited them in the little cottage, which of late she had forgotten to think about. It was old age, loneliness, and her own sins. She, who would make everything right when he should come—he! She had no longer the promised son to go to for refuge. The son was no more.

They walked slower than before, but, nevertheless, they came nearer and nearer to their home.

And when, at last, they stood before the door of the little cottage, they were reluctant to go in. Hans turned and looked back toward Dyrendal, there in the darkness. A silvery white light was reflected from the roofs. Martha put her hand upon his shoulder to steady herself and looked in the same direction.